Questioning Agency: Charles Maturin, the national tale, and the cultural production of identity

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I hereby declare this thesis to be my original work.

Abstract

In my thesis I look at the works of Charles Maturin, focusing particularly on four novels (*The Wild Irish Boy, The Milesian Chief, Women, Melmoth the Wanderer*).

I argue that in these works we can see Maturin in effect offering a materialist critique of an emerging discourse of Irish Romantic nationalism.

Taking a theoretical cue from the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Jürgen Habermas, I aim to show how Maturin was concerned with how constructions of national identity and their expression in literature were intimately bound up with questions as to the role of culture, and the level of agency, it has within the public life of the modern nation/state. In his fiction, we can see a conflict between a residual aristocratic 'high' culture and an emerging mass culture. The role of the novelist comes under scrutiny, as Maturin points out the complicity between the 'National Tale' and the mass-market novel, a form of cultural production that was critically suspect for his fellow Romantics.

For Maturin the central irony of the national tale is that its culturally determined notion of nationality is presented within the most commercial and, for him, materially determined form of literary production. Maturin in these novels engages with not only Owenson's fiction but also with Madame De Staël's important novel *Corinne, or Italy* as a foundational text in the Romantic construction of national identity. *Women* in particular questions whether female cultural agency is transferable to other 'fields' (to take a term from Bourdieu). The process by which the woman of genius helps to create a national sphere which then proceeds to marginalise her, reducing women to the status of a purely aesthetic objects without political agency, is commented on in both *The Milesian Chief* and, especially so, *Women*. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the focus changes to the role that folklore and 'traditional history' (a term from the novel) has in the national imagination. *Melmoth* engages with different forms of historical narration and memory, ultimately finding no one way of transmission – rather than appropriating folk culture in an auto-exoticist mode as other novelists of the time did, Maturin comments on the actual process of appropriation.

The distinction between an aristocratic culture and a popular culture continues, as the appropriation of folk culture is linked with the selective appropriation of folk culture for a polite audience. The dialectic between oral and textual authority is developed and shown to be a false opposition, both forms of narration ultimately drawing on the other for legitimacy.

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Introduction

Charles Robert Maturin was born in 1780 and died in 1824. He produced in his lifetime six novels, two books of sermons, three plays, and miscellaneous pieces of poetry. As Seamus Deane has noted, Maturin is "one of those writers whose reputation has been more enduring on the continent than it has been in their native traditions" (Deane 'Review': 98). According to Patrick Rafroidi "[with] Maturin Irish literature is an active force in French literature" (Rafroidi: 234).

In his own time and in Britain and Ireland Maturin was seen as something of an oddity, a genius who was most likely insane, or at best eccentric. His obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* began with a sentence linking his eccentric nature to the bizarreness of his literary output:

> This eccentric character was undoubtedly a man of genius, though it manifested itself, even in its most successful efforts, more in the extravagancies of an over-weaning imagination, than in the refinements of a correct taste or the coherency of intellectual power. (84)

This slightly condescending view is characteristic of nineteenth-century views of the man and his work (when he is remembered at all). What details of his life were recorded tended to highlight his habits, and so a biography of Maturin is incomplete without mentioning his love of dancing, his vanity, his placing of a wafer on his head to indicate he was deep in thought, and so on. Beyond this most writers fear to tread – as his friend Alaric Watts wrote after his death, "[his] life would be little more than a thread upon which to hang the fictions it produced" (Watts 'Conversations': 410). In a

sympathetic portrait of Maturin, the mid-nineteenth-century Irish poet James Clarence Mangan presented Maturin as a type of *poete maudit*:

> He - in his own dark way – understood many people; but nobody understood him in *any* way. And therefore it was that he, this man of highest genius, Charles Robert Maturin, lived unappreciated – and died unsympathized with, uncared for, unrequited after – and not only not forgotten, because he had never been thought about. (Mangan: 188 Italics in original)

In twentieth-century criticism Maturin has until very recently been neglected in surveys of Irish fiction of the Romantic period. Peter Garside has described critical voices on Maturin before the 1960s as belonging to "the 'lone wolf' variety" (Garside 'Romantic Gothic': 331). While much work has been done on Maturin's relationship to the Gothic genre of writing (it quickly became commonplace to describe *Melmoth the Wanderer* as the "conventional end point"[Sage] of the literary history of the Gothic novel), his position as an Irish writer has been neglected until relatively recently. Where noted his novels have tended to be presented as an unusual adjunct to writers like Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson. For Thomas Flanagan, surveying the manner in which Irish novelists were concerned with depicting Ireland, "the true interests of the author of *Melmoth the Wanderer* lay elsewhere" (Flanagan: 46). In an even more extreme manner, Barry Sloan regards Maturin's work "as one of the curious offshoots of the Anglo-Irish novel rather than as central to the growth of the genre" (Sloan: 48). New surveys of Irish fiction, however, have linked him closely with developments in the genres of the national tale (see Leerssen *Remembrance* and Ferris *Romantic National Tale*) and historical novel (Trumpener).

I would like to begin by looking at Mangan's description of a day he followed Maturin through the streets of Dublin:

> The third and last time that I beheld this marvellous man I remember well. It was somewhere about a fortnight before his death, on a balmy autumn evening, in 1824. He slowly descended the steps of his own house, which perhaps some future Transatlantic biographer may thank me for informing him was at No. 42, in York Street, and took his way in the direction of Whitefriar street. Thence he passed into Bride Street, proceeded up through Werburgh Street, into Castle Street, and passed the Royal Exchange to Dame Street, every second person staring at him and the extraordinary double-belted and treble-caped rug of an old garment, neither coat nor cloak, which enveloped his person. But here it was that I, who had tracked the footsteps of the man as his shadow, discovered that the feeling to which some individuals, rather oversharp and shrewd, had been pleased to ascribe this "affection of singularity" had no existence in Maturin. For, instead of passing along Dame-Street, where he would have been "observed of all observers", he wended his way along the dark and forlorn locality of Dame-lane, and having reached the end of this not very classical thoroughfare, crossed over to Anglesea-street, where I lost sight of him. Perhaps he went into one of those bibliopolitan establishments wherewith that Paternoster-row of Dublin abounds. I never saw him afterwards! (Mangan: 187)

According to Mangan, Maturin was someone who shrank form the open public space of Dame Street for the more private and obscure setting of Dame Lane. Mangan's recollection also locates Maturin within a precise topology of Dublin streets. It is interesting that the first Irish writer Mangan focuses on in his series of 'sketches' is one who was seen as mildly disreputable, questionably Irish, and intimately fused with the urban landscape, eventually becoming lost amidst the bookshops of Anglesea Street. As David Lloyd has noted, a certain antagonism to the urban centre in Irish culture is "an antagonism to the inauthenticity legible in its cultural forms" (Lloyd *Anomalous*: 93). Mangan's Maturin very definitely belongs in Dublin rather than Connaught.

What Mangan does not reveal is the purpose behind Maturin's walk. Maturin passes by a succession of locations, the only evidence of his passing

being the footsteps that Mangan follows. Mangan maps out the route that Maturin takes before he is eventually lost in the bookshops of Anglesea Street. His description gives Maturin agency; certain routes are taken, certain streets avoided. Maturin takes on some of the characteristics of the walker that Michel de Certeau describes in his essay 'Walking in the City':

> [If] it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements. (Certeau: 98)

De Certeau's walker is granted agency by him within the planned urban environment, choosing which streets to walk and what directions to take. As such, s/he transforms a place into a space. For de Certeau, the former term denotes the order "in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence" (117). 'Place' indicates order, 'proper rules' that "implies an indication of stability" (117). A space, on the other hand, "is composed of intersections of mobile elements" (117). Space is "practiced place," thus "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (117). Thus, Dame Street operates as a public space in that it is defined as a location in which the primary activity is viewing, walking, and mobility. Walking has the potential to make strange the plan of the city, reconfiguring trajectories and opening new possibilities. It both opens out and makes strange the city street. The public space of Dame Street is one in which Maturin would be 'observed of all observers'.

The place of Dublin is transformed by Maturin into a space in which he moves, choosing his route while followed by the young Mangan.

Mangan's Maturin disappears, and we are left only with the supposition that he may have gone into one of the 'bibliopolitan establishments' that are on Anglesea Street. His avoidance of the public is due to an inherent desire not to be stared at, to achieve some form of anonymity (which makes one wonder at his unusual choice of clothing). The public space is rejected in favour (perhaps) of the bookshop, the presumed alternative to the location in which one is observed and observer. The anecdote thereby confronts issues of publicity and privacy, with the private being located in both the interior of Maturin's house (he can only be seen once he emerges) and the privacy of the bibliopolitan establishments (into which he presumably disappears).

It is a suggestive guess on Mangan's part, and I would like to argue that it is an apposite choice of destination. Mangan has Maturin disappear into a literal marketplace for printed materials as an alternative to appearing in the public space of Dame Street. What I want to suggest is that this placing of Maturin within an actual marketplace is suggestive due to the extent that Maturin himself carefully placed himself within a literary marketplace, commenting in his fiction on the very system of exchanges and transactions that his fiction at times critiques. His awareness of his and his contemporaries' positions within a capitalist and, more importantly, consumerist historical moment inherently marked Maturin's ideas of

nationality and cultural production.[1] In effect, Maturin seems to provide a materialist critique of a type of Romantic nationalist cultural determinism in which the nation was seen as a specifically cultural entity travelling through history towards some goal. His engagement with the national tale, a genre that, as I will argue below, placed the cultural at the centre of efforts to present the nation, was problematic at best. While the national tale dealt with an iconography of antique cultural forms, Maturin, in his fiction, pointed out its status as a modern cultural form. Maturin's fiction always insists on the social and economic determinants in *modern* cultural production. It is important to point out though that there is a belief in some residual pre-modern aesthetic autonomy – Maturin simply questions the extent to which any modern form can adequately represent it. As I will argue, Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* already contains elements of self-critique – what Maturin does is simply develop these to a pessimistic conclusion.

1. Dignity, authenticity, and the literary marketplace.

As Ina Ferris has argued, Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* and the genre it can be said to have founded "[writes] Ireland less as a problem to be resolved than as a claim that demands to be heard" (Ferris *Romantic National Tale*: 50). Central to the national tale's claim for attention was the presentation of a primeval culture which had undergone the depredations consequent on a violent history of colonialism and economic and cultural subservience to a dominant imperial/metropolitan centre. The role of fiction

[1] For the theory of a 'consumerist revolution' in the eighteenth-century see McKendrick

was central, as in this period "the novel becomes a prime genre for the dissemination of nationalist ideals" (Trumpener: 13). The cultural nationalism of the national tale was concerned with presenting the (inevitably partial) recovery of prior cultural forms, usually presented to a sceptical observer from the metropolitan centre. What I would argue is that the national tale argues for cultural memory as it is concerned with persuading the English reader of the inherent dignity of the culture it portrays. By using the word 'dignity' I want to indicate the sense in which Kant uses it in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), in which it is separated from things that have a 'price':

> In the kingdom of ends everything has either a *price* or a *dignity*. What has a price can be replaced by something else as its *equivalent*; what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity.
> What is related to human inclinations and needs has a *market price*; that which, even without presupposing a need, conforms with a certain taste, that is, with a delight in the mere purposeless play of our mental powers, has a *fancy price*; but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself has not merely a relative worth, that is, a price, but an inner worth, that is, *dignity*. (42 Italics in the original)

I would like to argue that Kant's application of 'dignity' to rational agents is replicated in cultural nationalism's application of dignity to a national culture. Kant's separation of the rational agent is done "as a way of claiming that rational beings possessed a value which transcended the form of value which was now dominating his world" (Bowie: 273).

The impulse in cultural nationalism is to present the 'dignity' of the nation through a process of authenticity. The authority of the culture is predicated on its dignity, its existence as an end in itself. While it is true, as

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(1982), Bermingham & Brewer (1995), Brewer & Porter (1993)

Katie Trumpener points out, that cultural nationalism often trumpeted the specificity of its acts of cultural recovery in order to advance political or economic ends (20-23), the primary goal, the single prerequisite, was that that culture should be authenticated:

> Authenticity and claims to authenticity underlie the conceptual and cultural denial of dominance. The nation's very reason for being, its logic of existence, is its claim to an undeniable essence as a pure expression of the 'real', the obvious, the natural… (Graham: 133)

As Colin Graham argues, authenticity is not just a value but a process; "a way of facilitating yet controlling the replication of a singular essence" (133-134). Authenticity, for Graham, "combines the prioritisation of 'origins' with the 'pathos of incessant change'" (138).

The presentation of national dignity in *The Wild Irish Girl* complicates any simple difference between price and value, however. As I will argue in relation to *The Wild Irish Boy*, Maturin saw the national tale as part of a system of commercial transaction, and so the national essence presented therein is precisely open to a world of equivalents that devalue the original – replication of national essence as a *mere* commodity is at the centre of Maturin's novel. As Susan Stewart notes, the problem of authenticity arose due to the structural changes in literary production that marked the eighteenth-century, "the commodification of literary discourse":

> [This] commodification of writing gradually demanded an authenticity apparatus, for to separate cultural productions from their contexts of origins was also to separate them from their grounds of intelligibility and closure. (36)

As I will argue, the positing of national essence in *The Wild Irish Girl* is not nearly as clearly demarcated as some commentators (including Maturin) may have seen it. Maturin simply seizes on some of the instabilities in

Owenson's book and pushes them to their logical end. As I will argue, in *The Wild Irish Girl* authenticity is complicated only to be re-inscribed as an act of belief. Glorvina, the wild Irish girl, can only be seen as representing the national culture through an act of belief on the part of Mortimer, the English hero of the novel.

The authenticity that has been problematised by Glorvina's hybrid status (for instance, her preference for James Macpherson's 'translations' of Ossian's poetry over the original Irish Ossianic materials), must be partly countered by a belief in Mortimer and Glorvina's symbolic weight as representatives of their nations. I use here de Certeau's definition of belief "not as the object of believing (a dogma, a program, etc.) but as the subject's investment in a proposition, the *act* of saying it and considering it true" (Certeau: 178). What makes Glorvina a representative of Ireland, in other words, is not her own claim to authenticity, but Mortimer's investment in that claim – his suspicions about her status as national figure are the true subject of the novel. Thus, Glorvina becomes loaded with the imagery of national and natural genius, while in a parallel move Mortimer's status as settler is an act of belief, the Prince seeing little distinction between him and his Cromwellian ancestors. As Mortimer learns, in Irish one is always "talking of the invasion of Henry II as a recent circumstance" (88) – an historical elision that is not there simply to suggest that Connaught is some ahistorical idyll, but to allow Mortimer to be freighted with the symbolic capital necessary to provide the allegory of national reconciliation. His reconciliation with Glorvina is reconciliation between the invaders and invaded. In other words, we are presented with a novel in which characters

must learn how to believe in the symbolic capital of individuals. Authenticity can be side-stepped here as nationality becomes not so much an aspect of historical veracity (both Glorvina and Mortimer are problematic representatives of some national essence) as belief – investment in a way of seeing and saying. As de Certeau says, what is important is "a 'modality' of the assertion and not its content" (178).

I use the term 'symbolic capital' in order to refer to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's theorisations on symbolic capital arose from his study of the North African Kabyle, a peasant society in which he posited an economy of practices that complicated any simple economistic analysis by presenting social practices that seemed "economically aberrant only if one forgets all the material and symbolic profit accruing from [them]" (*Outline*: 181). Symbolic capital is the prestige and honour that certain families have which can in turn be converted into economic capital. For Bourdieu, the development of a notion of disinterestedness in aesthetics leads to an anthropological viewpoint that places peasant rituals as somehow removed from economic practices:

> If the constitution of art *qua* art, accompanying the development of a relatively autonomous artistic field, leads one to conceive of certain primitive or popular practices as aesthetic, one inevitably falls into the ethnocentric errors unavoidable when one forgets that those practices cannot be conceived as such from within. (*Outline*: 178)

Bourdieu posits a social scene that that is constituted of different fields of practice and varying forms of capital. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital in Kabyle society can be converted into 'material' capital (recognisable under a more traditional economistic view). This convertibility, however, rests on disguise, as there is no literal monetary

worth to certain social practices. Bourdieu recalls a scandal concerning a builder who finished work on a house and in lieu of the traditional meal given in the mason's honour asked for the monetary equivalent (*Outline*: 172-73). This leads Bourdieu to conclude that symbolic capital can only have an effect if it is disguised from material forms of economic capital that it affects and is affected by:

> Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby *disguised* form of physical "economic" capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in 'material' forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects. (*Outline*: 183 Italics in original)

What I want to suggest in mentioning Bourdieu is that the national tale, concerned with the amelioration of Irish political and economic woes, both presents 'traditional' practices as somehow belonging outside of the realm of economic practices, and at the same time disguises its own economistic ends under the a Romantic veneer of disinterestedness. The romantic story of the national tale, in presenting a heroine whose value rests on the fact that she is both "*natural* and *national*" (120 Italics in original), presents only one facet of symbolic capital, its role in presenting a prestige that is not based on capitalist notions of value. Owenson certainly complicates this in *The Wild Irish Girl* by suggesting that Glorvina is not as clearly separated from the world of goods as Mortimer may wish her to be. However, even though, as I will argue later, *The Wild Irish Girl* contains the seeds of a self-critique, it is Maturin who really foregrounds the convertibility (or non-convertibility in some cases) of different forms of capital as a theme in his fiction.

For Bourdieu, belief in the symbolic and cultural capital of an aesthetic object is a result of recognition. Culturally dominant forms exercise power through what he calls symbolic power:

> [Power] or capital becomes symbolic, and exerts a specific effect of domination, which I call symbolic power or symbolic violence, when it is known and recognised (*connu et reconnu*), that is, when it is the object of an act of knowledge and recognition. (*In Other Words*: 111)

The ritual practices therefore only exert power in a society that recognises the ideological assumptions underlying them. In order to recognise the symbolic capital of an object, then, there is required a level of knowledge. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, as I will argue, this knowledge is the structuring principle of romance, into which Mortimer is gradually inculcated. As I will argue later, Owenson's national tale, like Bourdieu's sociological work, is intimately concerned with the level of transferability of capital from one field to another.

As Toril Moi comments, "[the] question of the exchange value of different forms of symbolic capital arises every time an agent attempts to move from one field to another" (507). Thus, an accumulation of cultural capital does not necessarily transfer into an accumulation of economic capital. Indeed, for Bourdieu, the field of literary production is marked by the inverse relationship between economic and cultural capital, in which there is a difference between 'genuine' and 'commercial' art:

> Thus the opposition between 'genuine' art and 'commercial' art corresponds to the opposition between ordinary entrepreneurs seeking immediate economic profit and cultural entrepreneurs struggling to accumulate specifically cultural capital, albeit at the cost of temporarily renouncing economic capital. (*Field of Literary Production*: 82-83)

While we might want to question how rigidly we can apply such assumptions to the period under discussion,[2] I would argue that Maturin certainly sees the pursuit of popularity (large sales) as divergent to the integrity of the artistic producer. The national tale therefore has a problem if the symbolic capital it claims to present is in fact merely part of a commercial system of transactions.

This leaves us with the problem of the national tale as a commodity within a modern system of exchange:

> The development of modernity is not least a result of the commodity form offering a means of exchanging anything for anything else. This possibility speeds social and material interchange and facilitates social innovations. Critiques of modernity often concentrate on the cultural consequences of this development, suggesting that it destroys the intrinsic value, the 'dignity', of things. (Bowie: 273)

As an illustration of this we might want to consider Marx's sardonic statement in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) that "one volume of Propertius and eight ounces of snuff may have the same exchange-value, despite the dissimilar use-values of snuff and elegies" (Marx: 28). This problem of equivalence was particularly an issue for novelists, who worked in a medium that throughout the period was seen as a particularly commodified form of literature. The issue for the novelist was to differentiate his/her product from the system of exchange-values, and suggest that there was more to their work than its status as a commodity within a marketplace. For instance, in *The Man of the World* (1773), Henry Mackenzie's unnamed narrator seems to suggest that his work has some status above its status as a material commodity:

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[2] Elizabeth Harries points out that while we may read poor sales of *Lyrical Ballads* as

> Those letters and papers were the basis of what I now offer to the public: had it been my intention *to make a Book*, I might have published them entire; and I am persuaded...that no part of them would have been found more foreign to the general drift of these volumes, than many that have got admittance into familiar collections. (I, 10-12 Italics in original.)

Mackenzie suggests that there is a qualitative difference between his novel and 'a book'. Instead of publishing entire the fictional memoirs and letters he has received the unnamed narrator instead chooses "rather to throw them into the form of a narrative" (12). This action, in other words, is what raises the work from being a mere book into a narrative, a purportedly moral and aesthetic object. For Maturin, however, the equivalence between values was not so easily escaped. The agency of the author was always compromised by the demands of production.

While he has been labelled as "one of the earliest distillers of that blend of nationalism and romanticism which was to be so potent in the nineteenth century" (Piper & Jeffares: 261) it is important to question further Maturin's involvement in the cultural politics of Irish nationalism. For Maturin, a writer was always part of a marketplace, and so the transcendent cultural sensibility that 'the nation' demanded was always compromised by the needs of the audience and producer. The constraints of the market always pressed upon the writer, and the finished product that was sold in the bookshop was compromised by its mediation through publishers and editors. When *Manuel,* his second play, was published, Maturin referred to it as "the pantomime they have printed under that name" (Ratchford & McCarthy: 76). His comment that the publishers had "un-Maturined" (Ratchford &

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indicative of some cultural worth, for Wordsworth "it spelled failure to enter the cultural

McCarthy: 15) his first play, *Bertram* (1816), reveals his anger about the changes his work was constantly undergoing under the pressures of publication. This was a process that had begun with the altering of the title of his first novel from *The Family of Montorio* to *Fatal Revenge*, "a very bookselling appellation" (*Women*: I i) as Maturin commented acerbically. After his death, his wife wrote to Sir Walter Scott that "Mr Maturin often felt that he was deceived by his Booksellers" (Ratchford & McCarthy: 109).

If the Romantic artist in Maturin was compromised by publishers, however, there is also an indication that he and his contemporaries saw his work as wilfully populist, evincing a self-conscious abnegation of artistic dignity for popular acclaim. A friend of Maturin, Alaric Watts, recalled with some disapproval that Maturin "was obliged to be popular in the form of his writings; and it must be confessed, his own inclination never rebelled against that obligation" ('Recollections': 146). The obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* asserted that "[Maturin] wrote, in fact, for money, not for fame" (85). As Maturin himself said in his preface to *The Wild Irish Boy* "he who would prostitute his morals, is a monster, he who sacrifices his inclination and habits of writing is – an author" (xi). This is an idea that recurs throughout Maturin's writing. The author is one who is always compromised by his or her position as an author who must sell books, a figure who is 'inauthentic' due to the commercial situation in which he or she is placed. Mangan may have lost sight of Maturin amidst the Dublin bookshops, but the trajectory of his walk through Dublin is prefigured in his

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field as he wished" (460).

literary career, in which the 'bibliopolitan establishments' were a central factor.

What Watts and Maturin both display is scepticism about the level of cultural authenticity available to the 'popular' writer. For Watts, the word popular is akin to a dirty word, denigrating the author for somehow betraying his natural talents. To a more extreme level, Maturin seems to suggest that there is little difference between the author and the prostitute. Both writers present the popular author as constrained by his position within a particular discourse. We can see in Watts and Maturin a connection made between 'popular' and 'commercial'. To be popular, then, is to belong to a mass culture in which artistic ability is not of central importance. Indeed, Maturin himself seems to suggest that ability and novel-writing are almost exclusive:

> At the same time, it is desirable to look forward to a time, when independence, acquired without any sacrifice of integrity, will enable a man to consult only himself in the choice and mode of his subject. He who is capable of writing a good novel, ought to feel he was born for a higher purpose than writing novels. (*The Wild Irish Boy*: I, xi)

In looking at the manner in which Maturin deals with the threat to artistic integrity posed by the market, I want to read his fictions in the context of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1792), Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807). These works, I will argue, are formative influences on Maturin and led to a particular focus in the novels under discussion on how the public space operates. These texts are formative in that they present (albeit to different ends) powerful signifiers of feminine sensibility that are marginalised by a commercial, middle class modernity. Maturin presents a

commercial modernity in which powerful signifiers of prior social and cultural formations are marginalised by a public lacking the necessary sensibility to appreciate them. The type of cultural production that women of genius perform in De Staël and Owenson is replaced by an emphasis on cultural consumption. Maturin foregrounds in his novels the possibilities of achieving some 'authentic' form of cultural production in a world of cultural *re*productions. At the same time, the place of the writer within the marketplace is important, as it introduces an element of cynicism into Maturin's belief in the authenticity of fictional representations of a national aesthetic.

2 Concepts of the public and private sphere.

I want to return, though, to Mangan's anecdote, which is suggestive in the extent to which it locates as a central problem what it means to be in public. Why, after all, should a bookshop be considered a less public space than a public thoroughfare? Maturin's fiction has to be read against developments in thinking about the formulations of 'public' and 'private'. I will argue that the seemingly private world of the bookshop is in fact merely another form of public sphere. As Andrew McCann points out, in the late eighteenth-century "privacy, private reading, and private culture-consumption become mediums of a public now understood as an imagined community of private individuals" (McCann: 11-12). The public space therefore, is replicable within a private, domestic setting through the act of reading. As I will suggest later, the role of the domestic space, as representative of the larger dominance of a middle class ideology of proper

female conduct, must be considered before looking at the presentation of cultural production in Maturin's novels.

By mentioning such terms as 'literary marketplace' and 'public sphere,' I wish to engage with and hopefully complicate the influential work of Jürgen Habermas on the historical formation of a bourgeois public sphere. In Habermas' formulation, the development of a mediating sphere between the private institution of the family and the institutions of the state was a central development of the eighteenth-century. Consequent on the huge increase in print-media (newspapers, journals, books), and also on important areas of social interaction (Habermas lists the coffee-house of the eighteenth-century city as an example), the public sphere was a zone of engagement between rational agents in the social sphere; "the sphere of private people coming together as a public" (Habermas: 27). For Habermas, the development of the public sphere was an integral part of the modernisation of European societies.

Geoff Eley has argued that an examination of English radicalism complicates the ideal of a stable bourgeois public sphere:

> It is important to acknowledge the existence of competing publics not just later in the nineteenth century, when Habermas sees a fragmentation of the classical liberal model of the *Öffentlichkeit*, but at every stage in the history of the public sphere and, indeed, from the very beginning. (Quoted in Gilmartin: 549-550)

For Paul Magnuson, Habermas' eighteenth-century public sphere becomes a problematic concept with the emergence of a complex series of contending and contrasting political ideologies in the 1790s. As Magnuson reminds us, "in Britain in 1773 'the Publick' was…not synonymous with the entire population, but composed of a limited number of educated and enfranchised

property owners" (7). When Edmund Burke estimated that the number of people with the leisure to engage in rational discussion, the 'public', in other words, numbered about four hundred thousand, the limits of what constituted the public became clear. As the radical pamphleteer John Thelwall noted, Burke's exclusive calculation was untenable: "This the British public! – and what are all the rest? Political non-entities! – a dash of the pen has blotted them out of the book of life" (quoted in McCann: 19). The huge growth in radical, working-class (and nationalist) oppositional voices in the Romantic period, what Nancy Fraser has termed "subaltern counterpublics" (123), complicate any notion of an idealised public sphere.

Jon Klancher notes the dissolution of a single reading audience into multiple audiences, and the movement from a public sphere that had a spatial element to one that was thought of as primarily textual. Commenting on James Anderson's journal, the *Bee*, Klancher points out the methods by which the periodical "displaces the public gathering place" (23) in favour of replicating communicative exchange within its own text, thus acting as a portable 'public' space. The public sphere "has become a representation instead of a practice and, as the 1790s will reveal, an image losing much of its force" (Klancher: 24). After the development of multiple literary audiences in the 1790s, by the time Maturin was writing his novels, any claim to a unitary associative public sphere in the sense of Habermas' formulation was irrevocably changed. In *Women*, it is not just important that newspapers carry the news of Napoleon's defeat, but that the newspapers are separated along party lines with contending factions reporting the news in markedly different ways to their respective audiences. More importantly, in

that novel the performance of a woman of genius within a public space is shown to be less effective a method of communication than the print-media that dominates the public sphere. As I will argue later, Maturin's novels present a public sphere that is dominated by the textual, thereby pushing to the margins of discourse the oral performances of his principal characters.

In order to do examine the plight of Maturin's central characters, a slightly more variegated view of social formations than Habermas' idealised public sphere might be needed. Lawrence Klein, for instance, argues for a variety of separate spheres, ranging from the economic sphere through to the sphere of state politics and, finally, the "associative public sphere," a sphere of "social, discursive and cultural production" (104). The binary opposition between public and private as it stands in the historiography of the eighteenth-century is interrogated by Klein, although he ends his essay by acknowledging that "it is just possible that eighteenth-century culture offered possibilities and opportunities [to women] that ceased to be available in the nineteenth" (105).

The notion of a public sphere that is separate from though closely intertwined with the private sphere of the bourgeois family is a useful tool in looking at Maturin's novels. As feminist critics have pointed out, the Habermasian public sphere is very much a masculine domain, from which women as rational agents are implicitly excluded. Joan B. Landes argues that the changes wrought by the French Revolution led to "a more pervasive *gendering* of the public sphere" (Landes *Women*: 2). Landes argues that subsequent to the French Revolution the public sphere was to become a zone of engagement for male members of the polity, with women understood as

belonging to the private sphere of the domestic space. A similar, though slightly more complicated, theme is broached in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's history of the development of an English middle-class consciousness. For them, "the public world was consistently organised in gendered ways and had little space for women" (416). According to Davidoff and Hall, however, domesticity cannot be restricted to any one sex or setting. The importance of the family as a social, economic, and political unit was so prevalent amongst the middle classes that the 'separate spheres' thesis is inevitably problematised. The rigid demarcation of public and private is reversed in their study:

> Public was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of 'separate spheres'. Both were ideological constructs with specific meaning which must be understood as products of a particular historical time. (Davidoff & Hall: 33)

As such, what is more important than trying to simply demarcate separate spheres of influence is to attempt to identify forms of agency within both spheres. As I will argue later, and in specifically in relation to Maturin's novel *Women, or Pour et Contre* (1818), the exclusion of women from a public sphere that is seen as primarily based on textual practices (by which I mean the proliferation of print-media) is a central concern. Along with this, though, is a concern about how the woman of genius can fit into a dominant domestic ideology that links both the public and the private spheres of family and nation. However, in order to examine this we need to consider the place that Maturin accords the female genius within modern society. Part of the problem that Maturin's central characters have is that they prove to be anomalous within a newly developing culture of middle class

domesticity. A character like Zaira or Armida performs a public role, representing a particular aristocratic cultural sensibility, but their problem is that their public role is entirely divorced from a private one. The woman of genius cannot live in harmony with society as her abilities exclude her from the dominant middle class morality. Madame De Staël's influential portrait of a creative woman, Corinne, who loses her lover to a more proper and domestic Englishwoman embodies this problem. After Oswald has left her for the more modest Lucille, Corinne recognises that he has chosen a partner more in tune with society:

> Will [Oswald] find any woman with more intelligence, more feeling, and more affection than I have? No, he will find less and he will be satisfied. He will live in harmony with society. (357)

Female modesty and domesticity, however, are more important than merely 'fitting in'. Indeed, after the traumatic social upheaval consequent on the French Revolution, the ideal of domesticity becomes central to the British notion of stability and national identity. A central counterblast to the revolution, and one that was to have an incredible impact on debates about nationality and femininity, Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), underlined the domestic setting of the family as the bedrock of national stability. One of Burke's more famous phrases in *Reflections* characterises the family as 'the little platoon' from which larger public sentiments arise;

> To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and mankind. (135)

As Clara Tuite suggests, with Burke "the family is a political institution" (125). For Burke public affections begin in the family: "No cold relation is a zealous citizen" (315). Female sexuality becomes central to Burke. If the family is a centrally important political unit to the continuation of stability in Britain, then female sexual desire must be firmly contained within a patriarchal domestic setting. As Claudia Johnson puts it:

> With the countryside full of Jacobin riffraff out to ruin English families by seducing women away from fond fathers and rightful husbands, female modesty – that is to say, the extent to which women do not feel, express, and pursue their own desires – is no less than a matter of national security. (Johnson *Jane Austen*: 14)

The separation, therefore, between private and public was not as clear cut as a simple insistence on separate spheres might imply. What was at issue was the proper code of conduct for women within a public and domestic setting. The incredible popularity of female conduct books throughout the eighteenth-century ran alongside the increased importance placed on the construction of an ideal household. As Nancy Armstrong points out, the decline in the number of conduct books sold by the very end of the century does not suggest a passing of an ideal form of feminine domesticity into desuetude so much as the fact "that by this time the ideal had passed into the domain of common sense where it provided the frame of reference for other kinds of writing" (63). Burke, therefore, was simply restating a common ideal of social regulation, broadening it out however into a prescriptive programme for the preservation of a particular national formulation. For Burke and for middle class ideologies in general, the domesticity of women was important for national self-imagining. The virtue of women was central to the definition of the nation.

As a preliminary to looking at Maturin's novels I would like to examine the manner in which the national tale, best represented by Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), argues for a culturally determined nation. In Owenson's novel, the woman of genius is central to the cultural definition of the nation. By placing the formation of the national tale within the context of a wider debate in the eighteenth-century about the nature of public and private virtue, I hope to show how Owenson effectively appropriated Burke's anti-revolutionary iconography in order to create a culturally determined patriotic loyalism. In Owenson's tale, female virtue is perfectly compatible with cultural genius, a view which would be refuted in Maturin's work. What Owenson does in *The Wild Irish Girl* is appropriate Burke's most rhetorically impassioned image, Marie Antoinette at Versailles, and uses it to argue for the centrality of female creativity to the nation.

3. Public and private virtue.

Before I do this, however, it is important to briefly mention the background of eighteenth-century debates about civic humanism (also termed classical republicanism) - the belief that the citizen should be devoted to an active life of public and political virtue, exercised through military and political service.[3] Debates about Habermas and the validity of his formulation have been remarkably free of discussions of this area of inquiry in the eighteenth-century. Central to both debates though are questions of agency within a public context. Questions of virtue, and the

prevalence of a form of civic humanism in Irish political thought have become prominent in recent years, particularly as they relate to the role of virtue in the ideology of the United Irishmen.[4] In order to understand the interaction of Maturin and the literary marketplace, we need to understand the transformation in certain ethics of public action that occurred in the eighteenth-century. While attempts to place Irish political thought about virtue within an Atlanticist tradition of civic humanism have added to an understanding of the dynamics of Irish republicanism and reaction, the conflict between public virtue and private virtue – a conflict between classical republicanism and interiorised sensibility – has been much less well-studied. This is unusual, as I will argue that the national tale is fundamentally concerned with re-orienting virtue from the classical republican sense to a cultural nationalist one. In romantic nationalist fiction, active sensibility replaces active citizenship as the central plank of public agency.

For many eighteenth-century commentators, the ideal of the active citizen was threatened by 'corruption,' the absorption of the subject in a self-centred private world of indulgence, consequent on new forms of wealth generation, an increase in the production of material goods, the development of overseas trade, and the increased mobility of property and credit. As Pocock argues, central to the civic humanist ethic was a belief in the

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[3] For one of the classic accounts of civic humanism see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[4] This trend can be seen in the contributions to Connolly, S.J. ed. *Political Ideas in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), Bartlett et al. *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Four Courts Press, 2003), Dickson, Keogh, & Whelan eds. *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism, and Rebellion* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), and monographs listed in the works cited section by Small, Smyth, and Elliot.

importance of landed property to the polity (*Machiavellian*: 423-46). Property was vitally important to the citizen's role as a virtuous actor within the public world:

> The citizen possessed property in order to be autonomous and autonomy was necessary for him to develop virtue or goodness within the political, social and natural realm or order. He did not possess it in order to engage in trade, exchange or profit; indeed, these activities were hardly compatible with the activity of [classical republican] citizenship. (Pocock *Virtue*: 103)

Political power rested with the owners of land, and public virtue was often conflated with the private interests of the landed elite. Landed wealth, as Liz Bellamy writes, "was therefore associated with the exertion of public virtue, and other forms of wealth with the lack of this essential quality" (Bellamy: 2).

According to Joyce Appleby, consumption of goods appeared in eighteenth-century debates "under the rubric of luxury" (Appleby: 165). It is important to briefly look at how British thinkers dealt with the new forms of consumer behaviour by examining 'luxury' and re-formulating the classical idea of civic duty from a public role to one which intertwined both the public and private spheres.

Bernard Mandeville, who argued for the centrality of 'private vices' to the public good in his *The Fable of the Bees* (1723-1728), provided what was "the first work of the eighteenth century to provide a comprehensive challenge to [...] various politics of virtue" (Burt: 128) . Mandeville's treatise was particularly injurious to an Old Whig tradition of civic humanism. As E.G. Hundert writes, *The Fable of the Bees* was attacked:

> in the context of an intense and comprehensive critique of modernity, undertaken in the name of an ideal of virtue practised in antique Mediterranean republics, particularly republican Rome and the quasi-mythical Sparta framed by Lycurgus' laws. For the Augustans, the primary language of political opposition engaged a vocabulary that opposed virtue to corruption, the dignity of landed to mobile property, and public service to self-interest. (Hundert: 9)

For Old Whigs, developing much of the civic republicanism of writers like James Harrington (author of the commonwealth tract, *Oceana* [1656]) in the seventeenth-century, luxury was dangerous because it promoted an ethic of self-indulgence and interiority, thereby sapping the strength of the populace in their role as active citizens. Luxury had to be avoided in order for liberty and the due place of the populace in the constitution to be preserved. As the sixteenth-century liberal, Algernon Sidney wrote; "liberty cannot be preserved if manners are corrupt, nor absolute monarchy introduced where they are sincere" (quoted in Barker-Benfield: 58). An active citizenship, for such writers, was necessary both in order to ensure a counterbalance to the monarchy and preserve the security of the state.

In contrast to a view in which luxury "effeminates and enervates the people, by which the nations become easy prey to the first invaders," (Mandeville: 68) Mandeville argued that luxury is irrelevant to the citizen's armed role as defenders of the polity:

> Clean linen weakens a man no more than flannel; tapestry, fine paintings or good wainscot are no more unwholesome than bare walls; and a rich couch, or a gilt chariot are no more enervating than the cold floor or a country cart. (Mandeville: 70)

Mandeville argued for an indulgence of selfish sensations that had ultimately a public benefit to the polity. For Mandeville, therefore, there was an important link between the public and private spheres, albeit a link that was

anathema to certain models of Whig political thinking. Industry, luxury, and public good are all linked together in *The Fable of the Bees*.

In his essay 'Of Luxury' (1752, later renamed 'Of Refinement in the Arts'), David Hume asks if we can reasonably expect "that a piece of woollen cloth will be wrought to perfection in a nation, which is ignorant of astronomy, or where ethics are neglected" (270-271). Hume is arguing for the interconnection between "industry, knowledge, and humanity" (271), and trying to allay the fears of commentators who saw 'luxury', that general term used to describe increased habits of consumption in the eighteenth-century, as something that was potentially debilitating to the state. For Hume, writing later in the century although within the context of the debates around Mandeville, industry and the arts progress hand in hand, "linked together by an indissoluble chain" (271). Apart from leading to an increase in private satisfaction, the advance of a consumerist society brings benefits on the public polity:

> But industry, knowledge, and humanity, are not advantageous in private life alone: They diffuse their beneficial influence on the *public*, and render the government as great and flourishing as they make individuals happy and prosperous. The increase and consumption of all the commodities, which serve to the ornament and pleasure of life, are advantageous to society; because at the same time that they multiply those innocent gratifications to individuals, they are a kind of *storehouse* of labour, which, in the exigencies of state, may be turned into public service. In a nation, where there is no demand for such superfluities, men sink into indolence, lose all enjoyment of life, and are useless to the public, which cannot maintain or support its fleets and armies, from the industry of such slothful members. (272)

For Hume, in a society without a sense of 'luxury' idleness reigns, and "when sloth reigns, a mean uncultivated way of life prevails amongst individuals, without society, without enjoyment" (280).

Hume links, therefore, consumption and cultivation. As Elizabeth Eger points out, the progress of refinement consequent on industry leads "towards the creation of a community of cultural consumers" (114). Culture is therefore a form of consumption, yet one which has an important role in the creation of polite society:

> The more these refined arts advance, the more sociable men become... They flock into cities, love to receive and communicate knowledge; to show their wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture. (Hume: 271)

Communication, display, and conversation are all important towards the increase of refinement. As J.G.A. Pocock has put it:

> Man could now be described as a cultural animal and culture as a product of economics; and as the goods produced, and the techniques of producing and distributing them, grew in each phase more complex, human culture, imagination, and personality correspondingly increased in complexity. (Pocock *Machiavellian*: 498)

What this indicates is the essential historical nature of man – the development of society is a process, grounded in labour and encouraged by luxury. It is also, importantly, history as the progress of society rather than the individual. History is therefore an impersonal movement of social and economic forces that propel the individual. In essence, agency is taken away from an individual subject and placed within a sociological organism: "[Society] emerges [in Mandeville] independent of any human design" (Hundert: 51). I intend to examine later how a theory of culture that looks at the interconnection between economic, social and cultural development might complicate or question forms of cultural nationalism in the Romantic period in which cultural determinism replaces economic determinism and, in

the words of David Kaiser, a "national culture is seen as constituting the people, rather than being constituted *by* a people" (19 Emphasis in original).

Before examining these differing views, though, it is important to look into how Hume connects 'manners' and consumption. As has been noted, Hume links the progress of luxury and the arts as vital to the increased refinement and sociability of humanity. In order to defend the connection between refinement and consumption, Hume needs to show that luxury does not lead to a purely private, self-involved role for the consumer. The essay is concerned with "the effects of refinement both on *private* and on *public* life" (269). The refinement of the arts thus leads to greater sociability, and the public sphere is consequent upon men and women realising themselves to be consumers of cultural commodities:

> Particular clubs and societies are every where formed: Both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner; and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace. (271)

What we have here is a link made between sociability and the development of a public sphere. Manners, therefore, are essential to the development of public morality. Virtue becomes a matter of the individual's cultivation and sensibility as opposed to his (and in classical civic humanism the public subject is exclusively male) martial role.

Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) went some way to providing, in Fania Oz-Salzberger's words, "a theory of commercial modernity with classical-republican linchpins" (168). For Ferguson, civic virtue was under threat from luxury, and the origins of classical republican virtue could be discerned in a property-less savage state of society. For Ferguson, the savage and the barbarian were two distinct

representatives of particular stages on the development of civil society from 'rudeness' to civilisation:

> [We] may furnish two separate heads, under which to consider the history of mankind in their rudest state; that of the savage, who is not yet acquainted with property; and that of the barbarian, to whom it is, although not ascertained by laws, a principal object of care and desire. (Ferguson: 82)

The savage exists in a sort of proto-communistic society that does not recognise private property. There exists an almost egalitarian social structure that leads the savage to being a type of primitive democrat:

> From the descriptions in the last section, we may incline to believe, that mankind, in their simplest state, are on the eve of erecting republics. Their love of equality, their habit of assembling in public councils, and their zeal for the tribe to which they belong, are qualifications that fit them to act under that species of government. (99)

The savage, though, imperfect and violent as he is, belongs to a society that has "an indifference to pleasure" (95) and is even suggested to provide a model for the Greek and Roman civilisations:

> In these happy, though informal, proceedings, where age alone gives a place in the council; where youth, ardour, and valour in the field, give a title to the station of leader; where the whole community is assembled on any alarming occasion, we may venture to say, that we have found the origin of the senate, the executive power, and the assembly of the people; institutions for which ancient legislators have been so much renowned. The senate among the Greeks, as well as the Latins, appears, from the etymology of its name, to have been originally composed of elderly men. The military leader at Rome, in a manner not unlike to that of the American warrior, proclaimed his levies, and the citizen prepared for the field, in consequence of a voluntary engagement. The suggestions of nature, which directed the policy of nations in the wilds of America, were followed before on the banks of the Eurotas and the Tyber; and Lycurgus and Romulus found the model of their institutions where the members of every rude nation find the earliest mode of uniting their talents, and combining their forces. (85)

The barbarous stage follows on from the savage, and if it has the previous stage's bloodlust it also develops a new and destabilising feature; wealth:

> In passing from the condition we have described, to this we have at present view, mankind still retain many parts of their earliest character. They are still averse to labour, addicted to war, admirers of fortitude, and, in the language of Tacitus, more lavish of their blood than of their sweat. They are fond of fantastic ornaments in their dress, and endeavour to fill up the listless intervals of a life addicted to violence, with hazardous sports, and with games of chance [....] But we may apprehend, that the individual having now found a separate interest, the bands of society must become less firm, and domestic disorders more frequent. The members of any community, being distinguished among themselves by unequal shares in the distribution of property, the ground of a permanent and palpable subordination is laid.
> These particulars accordingly take place among mankind, in passing from the savage to what may be called the barbarous state. Members of the same community enter into quarrels or revenge. They unite in following leaders, who are distinguished by their fortunes, and by the lustre of their birth. They join the desire of spoil with the love of glory; and from an opinion, that what is acquired by force, justly pertains to the victor, they become hunters of men, and bring every contest to the decision of the sword. (98)

Barbarism becomes associated with anarchy. Private wealth and individual interest take over from communal bonds yet the political and cultural infrastructure that leads to civilisation remains absent. Barbarism thus becomes a midway point between the natural savage state and the modern cultivated one. So, at least in Ferguson's view, the term savage has more positive connotations than barbarian does.

As Oz-Salzberger points out, though, the increased respectability of wealth in eighteenth-century Scotland problematised the traditional republican denunciation of private self-indulgence:

> Delicacy, sensibility, even luxury, were aspects of an advanced civil life which in some crucial ways surpassed the classical models. The traditional republican discourse had no answers for the new respectability of wealth and social

> refinement, which eighteenth-century Scots came to associate with the modern age. (169)

Seven years before Ferguson's essay, though, Scotland, and Europe, saw the first publication of a literary phenomenon that seemed to offer the possibility of reconciling the martial strand of civic humanism with the cult of fine feeling and sensibility which were central to a modern commercial humanism. James Macpherson's purported translations of the bardic remains of Scotland, the work of 'Ossian', the last of the bards, had an immediate and immense effect on public taste from their first publication in 1760. As will become apparent later in my argument, Macpherson's Ossianic epics were vitally important intertexts for the development of romantic nationalist fiction. For the moment though, I would like to concentrate on their place within discussions of virtue and sensibility. As has been pointed out in recent criticism, Macpherson's recounting of the Ossianic epics allowed reconciliation between the tradition of civic virtue that encouraged the public role of the citizen and the private world of interiority and indulgence that the cult of sensibility implied. As John Dwyer points out, "[Ossian] provided a cultural seam between two ethical domains" (Dwyer: 169). Macpherson's poems presented an imagined past in which members of the Ossianic society were both fierce fighters within a martial social formation and yet polite and refined. When Sir Walter Scott wrote in 1805 that Fingal showed "all the strength and bravery of Achilles, with the courtesy, sentiment, and high-breeding of Sir Charles Grandison" (quoted in Dafydd Moore: 43) he was pointing out the link between what had seemed at times two recalcitrant positions. As Adam Potkay points out, through the interpolation of love lyrics within larger martial epics

"Macpherson synthesises the two poles of ancient experience; feminine and masculine, private and public, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*" (Potkay: 204). Ossian therefore can be seen to incorporate the feminine (that is, emotional interiority and sensual gratification) into a discussion about active citizenship that tended to define citizenship in exclusively masculine terms. As Dwyer points out, one of the most amazing attributes of the Ossianic heroes for members of the Scottish literati was their sense of civilised virtues before the development of modern commercial society:

> In his *Sketches for the History of Man*, for example, Lord Kames argued that 'savages in the hunter-state' tended to be selfish and brutal, particularly towards women, children and the aged. He marvelled that, without the advantages of court, improved agriculture, or commercial luxury, the Ossianic heroes displayed all the characteristics of a humane and civilized society. They were kind towards their friends and tender in their familial relations. (Dwyer: 168)

What Lord Kames was registering here was the extent to which Macpherson's Ossianic materials displayed a society in which the martial ideals of an active citizenship was intertwined with a concern for private, familial relations. In this way, the proper treatment of a feminized domestic space of family relations is presented as proof of the heroes' virtues. Two forms of social virtue, sensibility and citizenship, were reconciled in the Ossianic material of Macpherson.

In the preface to *Temora* (1765), Macpherson himself located his epics within a three-stage theory of the development of society that linked the nobility of the natural (Ossianic) state to the present state in which 'leisure' allows men to contemplate the earliest stage's qualities:

> There are three stages in human society. The first is the result of consanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The second begins when property is

> established, and men enter into associations for mutual defence, against the invasions and injustice of neighbours. Mankind submit, in the third, to certain laws and subordinations of government, to which they trust the safety of their persons and property. As the first is formed on nature, so, of course, it is the most disinterested and noble. Men, in the last, have leisure to cultivate the mind, and to restore it, with reflection, to a primeval dignity of sentiment. The middle state is the region of complete barbarism and ignorance. (Macpherson: 211)

By linking the virtues of the savage state to a commercial modernity, Macpherson in effect recuperates an ideal of civic virtue that does not critique commercial modernity. Social virtue is historicised, and the result of this is that in the third stage, where men "submit…to certain laws," they have the leisure to restore their minds to "a primeval dignity of sentiment." The reader experiences these depictions of a martial society as an aesthetic effect rather than as prescriptive. This third stage in Macpherson's history is the stage of reflection, where the sentimental reader restores to himself some aspect of primeval nobility through self-cultivation. Macpherson locates the origin of virtue in the first stage within the family, an important point, as we have seen when we considered Burke's locating of public sentiments within the private sphere. Macpherson's epics, with the stress on familial relations, and the concomitant valorisation of martial glory, in effect allowed for a recuperation of a form of civic virtue within commercial modernity.

4 Virtue and feminine agency in *The Wild Irish Girl*

In Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*, virtue is first conceived of in its classical form as service to the state. The father of the hero uses the term in what is explicitly a public sense:

> To sustain the loss of the most precious of all human rights, and forfeit our liberty at the shrine of virtue, in defence of our country abroad, or of our public integrity and principles at home, brings to the heart of the sufferer's dearest sympathising friend a soothing solace… (3)

The movement in the novel is towards a gradual understanding that a domestic settlement between the hero, Mortimer, and the Irishwoman Glorvina, is where true political agency is located. Mortimer's father continues throughout the novel to advise and coerce Mortimer into accepting a public role. This is explicitly placed in contrast to Mortimer's own inclinations. The struggle is between a classical civic virtue and a more sentimental politics in which guidance should be a matter of the heart:

> What plans for my future aggrandizement and happiness did his parental solicitude canvas and devise! The prospect of my brilliant establishment in life seems to have given him a new sense of being. On our return to England, I am set up for the borough of -. My talents are calculated for the senate: fame, dignity, and emolument, are to wait upon their successful exertion. I am to become an object of popular favour and royal esteem; and all this time, in the fancied triumph of his parental hopes, he sees not that the heart of their object is breaking. (226)

The Wild Irish Girl proposes a solution by allegorising the politics of the heart with the politics of public agency. As Mary Jean Corbett points out, the marriage plot makes "private relations of romance and reproduction central to the public and imperial good" (53). As I will argue in my chapter on *The Milesian Chief*, the moving of virtue from a notion of active citizenship to feminine cultural production and domesticity was an inevitable consequence of the appropriation of a discourse of republicanism by the United Irishmen. Civic virtue in Ireland in the 1790s could as easily lead to treason against the state, and so its unsurprising that Owenson feels the need to differentiate between the kind of public virtue espoused by Mortimer's

father and the female virtue displayed by Glorvina. The method by which she does this, I would argue, is by placing feminine cultural production at the centre of the new civic and domestic formation of the nation. A primeval Irish sentiment is show to be in accord with modern forms of sentiment. The controversy over the alleged forgeries of Macpherson centred on the question of the historical authenticity of the text. While Ossian might have united two important yet seemingly antithetical ethical positions, there remained the question as to the extent to which Macpherson's Ossianic material could be read as a text of national origins. Susan Stewart has argued for the centrality of questions of authenticity to the relationship between the author and the qualitative and quantitative change in literary production that occurred through the eighteenth-century:

> Here is the antiquarian motivation that we find from William Camden's *Britannia* on: the sense of a national culture and the impulse to legitimate that culture through documents and artefacts. And here we see the recurring role of the author, a role that at this point gets 'authored' as the location of the performing subject within an imaginary feudalism – in other words, an inversion of the conditions of authorship in the literary culture of the late eighteenth century. The feudal world is imagined as one where the author's position is a natural one; the organic validity of the minstrel and his discourse arise from his position within a social matrix. However, the eighteenth-century author, caught between the decline of patronage and the rise of commercial publishing, produces a discourse legitimated by a system of property and separation. The emergence of copyright rules will sever the author's body from his or her discourse and legitimate that discourse by the intricate structures of *more* discourse – the law." (113-114)

The question of authenticity is therefore bound up with the position of the author within the literary marketplace. Against mechanical modes of reproduction and the separation of the author from the work brought about by new copyright laws, points of origin become vitally important.

Documents frame, validate, and authenticate the recuperated and appropriated cultural artefact. Stewart names forms of writing that consciously mimic older forms as 'distressed genres' (67-68), a term she uses in order to place an emphasis on "their guise of self-referentiality" (67). In *The Wild Irish Girl* the characters take on some of the characteristics of 'distressed genres' – Glorvina herself as she appears to Mortimer is a prime example of the modern replicating the traditional:

> 'I am admiring,' said I, carelessly, 'the singular elegance of your costume: it is indeed to me a never-failing source of wonder and admiration.'
> 'I am not sorry,' she replied, 'to avail myself of my father's prejudices in favour or our national costume, which, with the exception of the drapery being made of modern materials (on the antique model), is absolutely drawn from the wardrobes of my great granddames. (98)

The national costume is one that is reproducible with modern materials. As with Ossian there is potential for confusion as to whether the 'singular' nature of the object is owing to its antiquity or the skill with which antiquity has been shaped by modern patterns. As Ina Ferris points out, the national tale as a genre was always in danger of merely producing "material for a fashion statement" (*Romantic National Tale*: 71). As is usual in *The Wild Irish Girl*, the conversation leads to footnotes offering a commentary on the use of ornaments in ancient Irish dress. As Colin Graham says of 'the authentic'; "[it] is never obvious and is forever in need of the supplement of commentary." (133) In order to convey the symbolic capital of Glorvina, in other words, there is a need to isolate her from a modern system of economic capital. This is done through the authenticating role of footnotes and commentary. This is particularly true in the debate about the Irishness of

Ossian, in which the main text of the novel is dwarfed by the amount of extra-textual commentary.

The authenticating use of antiquarian and historical texts in *The Wild Irish Girl*, however, complicates matters in that the original Ossianic poetry that is being authenticated never appears in the text. The Irish Ossian remains an absence around which a scholarly discussion is structured. When Mortimer dismissively suggests that Macpherson "tells us that the Irish have some wild and improbable tales [of] Fingal's heroes among them", which allows the Irish "some claim" (102) to the origin of Ossianic tales, he is immediately refuted by the priest. According to Father John, the Irish claims to Ossian are proven "from the testimony of tradition, from the proofs of historic fact, and above all, from the internal evidences of the poems themselves" (103). Following on from this is a long discussion supposedly proving the erroneousness of Mortimer's position. Having heard the authoritative arguments of the Prince and priest Mortimer admits to feeling "fairly routed" and claims "armed neutrality" between the Scottish and Irish arguments in the debate. This, however, is by no means the last word on the controversy, as Owenson has Glorvina declare a profound aesthetic sensibility at work in Macpherson:

> In the original Irish poems, if my fancy is sometimes dazzled by the brilliant flashes of native genius, if my heart is touched by strokes of nature, or my soul elevated by sublimity of sentiment, yet my interest is often destroyed, and my admiration often checked, by relations so wildly improbable, by details so ridiculously grotesque, that though these stand forth as the most undeniable proofs of their authenticity and the remoteness of the day in which they were composed, yet I reluctantly suffer my mind to be convinced at the expence of my feeling and my taste. But in the soul-stealing strains of "the Voice of Cona," as breathed through the refined medium of Macpherson's genius, no incongruity of style, character, or

> manner, disturbs the profound interest they awaken. For my part, when my heart is coldly void, when my spirits are sunk and drooping, I fly to my English Ossian, and then my sufferings are soothed, and every desponding spirit softens into a sweet melancholy, more delicious than joy itself... (111-112)

It is a remarkable passage, indicating that there may be a greater value placed on aesthetic wholeness (congruity) than on authenticity. The 'native genius' of the original Ossianic material is sublime and dazzling but ultimately fragmentary (it appears in flashes). Authenticity is shown by improbable relations and grotesque details. Ultimately, the 'English' Ossian is the source of emotional satisfaction – it is to Macpherson's genius rather than the native genius one goes if one indulges in sentimental satisfaction. Macpherson therefore allows both an aesthetic experience and a sentimental interiority that are denied by the original Gaelic material. As Clare O'Halloran points out, Owenson is displaying "her preference for an anglicised, romanticised version" (O'Halloran: 93).

We might want to consider, though, how this affects the 'native genius' of the original. O'Halloran suggests that Owenson may have used Ossian "with a calculating commercial eye" (92), yet we might want to consider whether the letter (Letter XII) in which the Ossianic debate of *The Wild Irish Girl* occurs complicates this. The discussion of Ossian is brought on by a description by the Prince of some ancient Irish weaponry. Ireland is here presented as the locale of chivalry, despite Mortimer's initial incredulity that chivalry would have been known in Ireland at all:

> Having explained the motto, [the Prince] told me that this collar had belonged to an order of knighthood hereditary in his family – of an institution more ancient than any in England, by some centuries.

> 'How!' said I, 'was chivalry so early known in Ireland? And rather, did it ever exist here?'
> 'Did it!' said the Prince impatiently, 'I believe, young gentleman, the origin of knighthood may be traced in Ireland upon surer ground than in any country whatever.' (100)

The discussion of chivalry brings on the discussion of Ossian, linking the two concepts by a discussion of ancient weaponry. At once reinforcing a particularly aristocratic martial heritage for Irish nobility, it also provokes a long antiquarian discussion in which several scholarly debates from the eighteenth-century are summarised. Intellectual weapons replace the weapons on display, and against this onslaught Mortimer has to acknowledge his own unarmed status:

> 'Were I a Scotchman,' said I, 'I should be furnished with more effectual arms against you; but as an Englishman, I claim an armed neutrality which I will endeavour to preserve between the two nations.' (110)

Where can we fit Glorvina's speech into this debate? On the one hand she elides the question of authenticity. Her role is to mediate between the antiquarian and aesthete:

> To you [the Prince] I would have accorded that Ossian was an Irishman, of which I am as well convinced as of any other self-evident truth whatever, and to Mr Mortimer I would have acknowledged the superior merits of Mr Macpherson's poems, *as compositions*, over those wild effusions of our Irish bards whence he compiled them. (111. Emphasis added)

She thus mediates between the national and individual genius. The authenticity of the Irish bards is 'self-evident', while Macpherson gains an aesthetic role. Her entry into this debate as a conciliatory figure is important though in the context of the earlier discussion of chivalry as well. Glorvina does not enter into that debate. Her role is to represent a cultural as opposed

to martial agency. As such, she actually plays the role of feminine genius within a chivalric ideology.

Yet in order for the marriage that offers conciliation to take place, Glorvina must be inculcated in continental forms of sensibility. Mortimer brings Glorvina a select library of French and German authors, with Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* prominent among them. It is only subsequent to her reading of Rousseau that Mortimer's admiration for Glorvina is understood by her to be erotically charged:

> Glorvina has made the plea of a head-ache these two mornings back, for playing truant at her drawing-desk; but the fact is, her days and nights are devoted to the sentimental sorcery of Rousseau; and the effects of her studies are visible in her eyes. When we meet, their glance sinks beneath the ardour of mine, in soft confusion: her manner is no longer childishly playful, or carelessly indifferent, and sometimes a sigh, scarce breathed, is discovered by the blush which glows on her cheek for the inadvertency of her lip. (149)

As will be shown later, the reading of Rousseau is something that must be overcome in Maturin's *The Wild Irish Boy* which takes a more orthodox Burkean view of feminine genius. This must be kept in mind with Mortimer's earlier remark before he leaves for Ireland that he turns with "apathy from the sentimental sorcery of Rousseau" (11). It is not just some 'natural' sentiment that Mortimer returns to in Ireland, then, as also a literary sentiment (the "polite literature and belles letters" [6] that his father proscribes him from reading).

Not long after her reading of Rousseau, however, Mortimer discovers that far from being the *genus loci* he had imagined her to be, Glorvina actually owns a library that startles him by its contemporaneity:

> Two little book-shelves, elegantly designed, but most clumsily executed (probably by some hedge carpenter), were

> filled with the best French, English, and Italian poets; and, to my utter astonishment, not only some new publications scarce six months old, but two London newspapers of some no distant date, lay scattered on the table, with some MS music, and unfinished drawings. (157)

What we are presented with here is a heroine who is fully immersed in a modern system of print-media. While before she was presented as a link with an Ossianic 'natural' state of society, she is now presented as actually participating within the modern public sphere. Ina Ferris suggests that "Glorvina refuses the purity of belonging that informs the model of nostalgic nationalism" (Ferris *Romantic National Tale*: 56). The novel will go some way, however, to re-inscribing a disjunction between an Irish sensibility and a modern commercial environment by having Mortimer visit Ulster, a region in which industry and commerce are paramount and 'the last of the Bards' lives a marginalised, circumscribed existence. That particular episode will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter, as it brings to the fore *The Wild Irish Girl*'s troubling relationship with a commercial modernity that it recognises but seeks to transcend.

It is at this point that we might want to consider a possible parallel between Glorvina and the representation of Marie Antoinette in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Mary Helen Thuente has pointed out that there is some contiguity between Glorvina and earlier republican representations of 'Liberty' (12). It is important to note, though, that Owenson draws the parallel with Marie Antoinette in order to replace republican iconography with what she will argue is a culturally nationalist one. As Seamus Deane has argued, Burke's book can be seen as a 'foundational text' for Irish Romantic writing (Deane *Strange Country*: 1-3),

by which he means it is one "that allows or has allowed for a reading of national literature in such a manner that even chronologically prior texts can be annexed by it into a narrative that will ascribe them a preparatory role in the ultimate completion of that narrative's plot" (Deane *Strange Country*: 1). While perhaps an overly teleological reading of Burke's position, it is useful in the importance it gives to Burke's *Reflections* as a central text in Irish and European literature. Its importance rests for Deane on the extent to which it formulates the troubled relationship between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Modernity here refers to the particular fiscal organisation of the French Revolutionary state, in which paper currency, the *assignats*, were circulated on the security of confiscated church lands. As J.G.A. Pocock has pointed out, this can be viewed as the central crime of the Revolutionaries for Burke:

> [The] French Revolution was perceived as having seized upon the lands of the French Church and made them its security for the issue of the national loan whose paper assignats were to be made legal tender everywhere. Now it is not possible to read Burke's *Reflections* with both eyes open and doubt that it presents this action – and not assaulting the bedchamber of Marie Antoinette – as the central, the absolute and the unforgivable crime of the Revolutionaries. (Pocock *Virtue*: 197)

Burke, though, links the two events. As Pocock points out, Burke suggests that manners predate commerce, rather than the suggestion in Hume that commerce leads to refinement. Having described the assault on Marie Antoinette's bedchamber, with its famous apostrophe to the young queen, Burke proposes that modern economists and Revolutionary philosophers have theorised the order of civil society's development wrongly:

> If, as I suspect, modern letters owe more than they are always willing to own to ancient manners, so do other interests which we value full as much as they are worth. Even commerce, and trade, and manufacture, the gods of our economical politicians,

> are themselves perhaps but creatures; are themselves but effects, which, as first causes, we choose to worship. (Burke: 174)

The chivalric tradition is one in which commerce and the arts could develop as there they had the foundation of 'manners'. The Revolution's destruction of manners is localised in the famous meditation on Marie Antoinette:

> It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, - and glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! What a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. – But the age of chivalry is gone. – That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. (169-170)

In this passage, Marie Antoinette becomes a synecdoche for a particular ideological position that the Revolutionaries have overturned. 'Manners', the term Burke and Scottish Enlightenment writers had used as a general term for a set of cultural and societal practices and beliefs, are located in the transcendent, beautiful woman. The elevated rhetoric of the passage separates an aesthetic experience (the sight of Marie Antoinette) from the gaze of the Revolutionaries (the 'economists and calculators'):

> On this [Revolutionary] scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex in general as such, and without distinct views, is to be regarded as romance and folly. (171)

As Ian Duncan notes, Burke here "makes private life contingent upon a liberal space of necessary *fiction* amidst the deathly forces of history" (26 Emphasis in original). The sexually rapacious revolutionary gaze disrobes the queen as well as the moral order she represents; "All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off" (Burke: 171). The revolutionary gaze strips away the symbolic capital of the queen and the ritualistic performances that are attendant on the monarchical tradition, reducing her down to her basest material existence.

Burke's book is an important intertext for Owenson, although it is interesting that Burke is only occasionally mentioned directly in *The Wild Irish Girl*, referred to, for instance, as "the celebrated Edmund Burke" (42) in a footnote describing the song of a peasant singer called Dignum. As Mary Jean Corbett writes; "it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Burke's analysis in shaping liberal discourse on Ireland in the nineteenth century" (Corbett: 37). In Owenson's novel we find the repetition of stock Burkean phrases like 'swinish multitude' (8). What I want to argue for though is a reading of the character of Glorvina that identifies her as both originating in Burke's counter-revolutionary analysis yet substantially modifying that analysis. The contiguity of Glorvina's celebration of Macpherson and the discussion of chivalry might then come into clearer view.

In Burke, Marie Antoinette is a passive victim of the wrongheaded Revolutionary idea that commerce predates manners. For Burke, as Pocock points out, manners are what allows commerce to thrive; "a civilised society is the prerequisite of exchange relations, and the latter alone cannot create

the former" (Pocock *Virtue*: 199). The revolutionaries have gotten it the wrong way around, and made the mistake of seeing commerce as the 'first cause' instead of manners. Marie Antoinette therefore lacks agency in the new political and social constitution of Revolutionary France. She is seen in purely, brutally, material terms as "but an animal". The social structure that accorded Marie Antoinette her position as something more than just an animal is regarded by the Revolutionaries "as romance and folly". It is by focussing on the word romance that we might see a connection with Owenson's novel. In *The Wild Irish Girl* we are presented with a character (Mortimer) who must gradually 'learn' how to view Glorvina through the medium of romance so that she is not merely an 'animal not of the highest order'.

When Mortimer describes his new situation as tutor to Glorvina and the modification this brings in his relationship with the Prince, his exasperation voices itself as an equivocal rejection of romance:

> Faith, to confess the truth, I know not whether to be pleased or angry with this wild romance: this too, in a man whose whole life has been a laugh at romancers of every description. (83)

The 'wild romance' is partly of his own making. On his first meeting with the Prince and Glorvina he hides his family name in order "to go on with the romance" (55). His reason for being in Ireland in the first place is an unspecified adulterous relationship in London, and there is an indication that if he were to meet Glorvina outside of the romance he has instituted he would view much as the Revolutionaries view Marie Antoinette:

> Yet here I am, groping my way down the dismantled stone stairs of a ruined castle in the wilds of Connaught, with my heart fluttering like the pulse of green eighteen in the

> presence of its first love, merely because on the point of appearing before a simple rusticated girl, whose father calls himself a *prince*, with a *potatoe ridge* for his *dominions*! O! with what indifference I should have met her in the drawing-room, or at the Opera! – there she would have been merely a woman! – here, she is the fairy vision of my heated fancy. (67-68 Italics in original)

The resemblance between Burke's "but a woman" and Mortimer's "merely a woman" is striking. The factor that allows Mortimer to overcome his prejudice and see the Prince as more than a potato farmer and Glorvina as more than a 'rusticated daughter' is 'romance' – that term that Burke's Revolutionaries use to dismiss the tradition that elevates Marie Antoinette above the status of 'animal'. As Corbett suggests, Mortimer moves from "a state of uninformed prejudice to a kind of parallel mystification within the frame of romance" (56). The recognition of the Prince and his daughter's nobility is consequent on reading them through the medium of romance. His initial surprise at Glorvina's manners suggests that he has made the same mistake that Burke castigated the Revolutionaries for making; placing manners as something that follows other causes instead of something natural:

> The *matter* of this little *politesse* was nothing; but the *manner*, the air, with which it was delivered! Where can she have acquired this elegance of manner! – reared amidst rocks, and woods, and mountains! Deprived of all those graceful advantages which society confers. (69 Italics in original)

Mortimer believes at this point (much as Hume had outlined in his essay on luxury) that society is the fount of manners, when in fact the case of Glorvina persuades him that 'elegance of manner' must be "the pure result of elegance of soul" (70).

Robert Tracy has argued that what is involved in Mortimer's eventual marriage with Glorvina is the outsider's acquiring of legitimacy:

> For the Anglo-Irish to rule, it is not enough to have legal right or British protection. It is necessary to connect some way with Irish tradition, to recognise and respect that tradition and the attitudes it embodies, to become a part of it. (Tracey: 40)

While this is in part true, the extent to which Owenson in effect rewrites Burke's apostrophe to Marie Antoinette is important to recognise. Corbett points out that when Burke is mentioned in *The Wild Irish Girl* it is to underline "Owenson's fundamental adherence to the notion that aristocratic power, properly exercised, can be a force for good" (61). Burke's rhetorical outburst both lamented the passing of proper 'manners' in favour of modern economistic thinking and celebrated a stylised image of female passivity.

Central to Burke's idea of the stability of tradition is the importance of landed property:

> The power of perpetuating our property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends most to the perpetuation of society itself. It makes our weakness subservient to our virtue; it grafts benevolence even upon avarice. The possessors of family wealth, and of the distinction which attends hereditary possession (as most concerned with it) are the natural securities for this transmission. (141)

In *The Wild Irish Girl*, however, the survival of landed property becomes an issue due to the way in which the west of Ireland is presented as being in a continual process of revolution and change. As Mortimer's father points out, the English usurpation of the Prince's land is simply part of a larger historical cycle of changing ownership:

> My first overtures of amity were treated with scorn; my first offers of service rejected with disdain; and my crime was, that in a distant age an ancestor of mine, by the fortune of war, had possessed himself of those domains, which, in a

> more distant age, a remoter ancestor of yours won by similar means. (240)

This complicates Burke's version of landed property yet returns us to Macpherson, in which the state of savagery is seen as anterior to property being established and the second stage is when property is established yet not subject to the laws that allow civil society to function. On one level, the west of Ireland operates at a barbaric stage, in which property changes hands due to violent conflict. In the property-less castle though, and in the relationship between the Prince and his daughter, we seem to have an Ossianic situation in which "the natural affection of the members of a family to one another" (Macpherson: 211) operate.

What Owenson does is re-write the importance of the female sentimental heroine within the national sphere as the element that gives legitimacy to the changing ownership of land. Mortimer moves from prejudiced outsider complaining of "the barbarity of the Irish" (13) to educated landowner. What this involves though is learning to view Glorvina as both a sentimental trope of sanctified tradition (as Burke saw Marie Antoinette) yet also recognising her status as cultural agent, an agent being, to use Marilyn Butler's description, "someone who *acts* or participates in the public sphere by interpreting it" (Butler 'Purple Turban': 480).

This is not quite enough, however, for as Claudia Johnson has pointed out Burke's apostrophe to the queen is not simply lamenting the passing away of a particular social formation but also a particular masculine response to female sensibility:

> To assert 'that the age of chivalry is gone' is to complain that 'men of feeling' are being replaced by ferocious *anti*sentimental men unsusceptible to the emotions on which

> civil order supposedly depends. (Johnson *Equivocal Beings*: 6)

A recurring theme in Maturin's novels will be the isolation of men and women of sensibility by the new post-Revolutionary dispensation. In *The Milesian Chief* and *Women* Ireland becomes the location not only of a sensibility that is anachronistic within the modern world, but also the location of those modern forces that actively contribute to its erosion.

In *The Wild Irish Girl* we find a hero who must learn to be sentimental, to view the situation in which he is placed through the lense of 'romance' that Burke's Revolutionaries had dismissed. The Irish peasantry is presented as themselves belonging to that chivalric way of viewing that Burke had mentioned in relation to Marie Antoinette. During a funeral procession, Mortimer says of the peasantry "that there was not an individual among this crowd of ardent and affectionate people that would not risk their lives 'to avenge a look that threatened her [i.e., Glorvina] with danger'" (188). It is this direct reference to the famous passage in Burke that fastens the link between Glorvina and Marie Antoinette (and thus the link between the Irish natives and pre-Jacobin sentiment). Glorvina thus combines virtue and sensibility, and the Irish peasantry is affirmed as being still capable of displaying the type of sensibility that Burke had seen as abandoned by the Jacobins. Thus, not only is Glorvina centred as a cultural agent, but also her status as representative of a particular culture is freed of the dangers of revolutionary threat. Virtue is rescued from the revolutionaries, and placed instead in the heightened sensibility and cultural performativity of the natural woman of genius. The novel ends with the hope that once the hearts of the people of Ireland "throb with the cheery pulse of national exility: -

then, *and not till then*, will you behold the day-star of national virtue rising brightly over the horizon of their happy existence" (251-52 Italics in original). Here, then, we have the founding ideal of romantic cultural nationalism – that the motor for historical change was located within the culture of the people, rather than in abstract universalising notions of public virtue. While the United Irishmen were involved in inculcating an unenlightened populace with the spirit of Montequeiu's *lois*, as a means of reaching some *esprit*, cultural nationalism, as Kevin Whelan argues, reversed this paradigm:

> If *l'esprit* of the people was nurtured, fortified, and stabilised, *les lois* would inevitably yield to the pressure of its insistent presence. Cultural nationalism therefore celebrated the customary, the regional, the particularist, at the expense of the new, the cosmopolitan, the universal. (*Tree of Liberty*: 61)

5. De Staël's *Corinne*, performativity, and the end of feminine agency.

As well as Owenson's important work, we need to examine Maturin's fiction in the context of its obvious debt to Madame De Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807) and suggest some of the issues that a reading of Maturin's work with the earlier novel in mind might raise. Involved in all of Maturin's 'Irish' fictions are images of feminine sensibility and artistic and intellectual genius, usually allied to a stress on the performative nature of selfhood and national identity. As has been noted, with Burke domesticity becomes vital to the preservation of the state. Vital to domesticity is the regulation of female desire. In Maturin's novels this will become a central theme, with characters presented as unsuitable to the domestic sphere that is becoming increasingly identified with society at large. The heightened

sensibility of Maturin's characters is anathema to Burkean domesticity due to the extent to which it challenges the gender relations necessary to a proper patriarchal domestic settlement. However, Maturin's reading of Burke is interesting in that he presents the domesticity as bound up with a commercial modernity that marginalises feminine sensibility in much the same way that Burke saw the French as attacking the symbolic capital of Marie Antoinette. In opposition to Burke's insistence on the importance of the patrilineal transmission of inherited property, Maturin adapts (most forcefully in *Women*) De Staël's and Owenson's insistence on the matrilineal transmission of aesthetic sensibility. Maturin recognises the extent to which these two writers deal with questions about the transferability of forms of capital. In this respect, *Corinne* in particular emerges as a crucial intertext for Maturin.

In using the term 'performative', some recognition must be given to the work of the feminist critic Judith Butler. For Butler, performativity "must be understood not as a singular or deliberative 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (*Bodies*: 2). Butler's work on the contingency of gender identity (and indeed, any identity) is important to remember at this point:

> The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a "doer behind the deed," but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed. (*Gender Trouble*: 142)

National identity, therefore, in *Corinne* or in other texts that locate national identity as being identifiable with a feminine cultural sensibility is based on a performance that allows identity to be constructed as something

in and of itself – something with a Kantian dignity. The link with gender is important here, as feminine agency in the construction of a (feminised) national sphere gives way in these novels to a domestic space in which gender identities are presented as being subject to a definite patriarchal power dynamic. A domestic identity, according to Butler, would be equally performed. What we have to emphasise is the public nature of Corinne's performing of identity. In this way, the important issue of agency comes to the fore.

It is important to consider whether the cultural agency that Corinne and similar characters have is translatable into other forms of power, or whether its reliance on public performance leads to its marginalisation within a bourgeois modernity that relegates such sensibility to an apolitical and ahistorical aesthetic ideal. Performativity is enacted in the actual performance of cultural practices, and in the way that out of these cultural practices identities are created. The very self-awareness of the performance that is inherent though, in the figure of the woman of genius, is a threat to a nationalism that seeks a political agenda. Corinne in effect thematizes the performative nature of identity *per se* through her theatrical performances of Italian identity.

The very questioning of gender politics that the woman of genius invariably provokes is a danger to a domestic ideology that requires a more rigid demarcation of gender roles, and a more stable categorisation of identity. The instability of identity that can be seen in the very title *Corinne, or Italy*, or even more so in *Women, or Pour et Contre* is anathema on every level except the aesthetic to bourgeois nationalism. Glorvina operated as a

cultural agent, and *The Wild Irish Girl* was careful to separate her and Mortimer from the more classically 'public' role envisaged by Mortimer's father. By the end of that novel, the value of the marriage resides in the allegorical level to which Glorvina represents an Irish culture assimilable to modern forms of aesthetic sentiment.

As Terry Eagleton has argued, political nationalism operates in a similar fashion to post-Kantian aesthetics in that it provides a conduit through which the individual can access a universal position:

> There is a political correlative of the unity of the individual and universal, known as the nation-state. The prime political form of modernity is itself an uneasy negotiation between individual and universal. [...] The hyphen in the term nation-state thus signifies a link between culture and politics, the ethnic and the engineered. (*Idea of Culture*: 57)

What Owenson argued for in her novel was a union of symbolic capital that did not need to operate within the mechanisms of the state. In fact, as noted previously, the role of statesman is something that Mortimer revolts against as something that goes against the dictates of his heart. The link made between Corinne and Italy, between the particular and the collective, is marginalised because it is made through a public performance that thematizes the aesthetic nature of the construct that is the national identity. The woman of genius simultaneously creates a space in which the nation can imagine itself and is excluded from the emerging national polity. It is important to note that what we have here is a clash between the nation as an aesthetic ideal and the actual trappings of the state. *The Wild Irish Girl* was careful not to couch its claims for Irish cultural capital within a separatist politics. Cultural nationalism is operable within the confines of the union. Both Ireland and Italy were particularly relevant in that both developed

highly detailed cultural self-imaginings yet had no existence as independent polities. The institutions of the state, when they appear in *Corinne* and *Women* exist not as consolidations of culture, but as appropriators of the legitimacy that cultural performance grants the nation. The woman of genius (Corinne and Zaira) are thereby excluded, and any feminisation of national culture that follows her is firmly resisted, or at least placed in a relegated position. In essence, the woman of genius finds herself both influencing and in conflict with her historical period as, in the polite words of *Blackwood's*, "she had not been anticipated". Lady Montrevor in *The Wild Irish Boy*, Armida in *The Milesian Chief*, and Zaira Dalmatiani in *Women*, all stand as exemplars of particular representations of female genius that were in circulation in Napoleonic Europe, either in the salons of Madame De Staël or in the novels of Lady Morgan.

What is important before we consider such images of female producers of cultural capital is the extent to which the issue of femininity was both central to such images and yet led to a certain marginalisation of certain types of female experience. It is important precisely because Maturin's fiction will build upon these contradictions and relentlessly hammer home the destructive effects that a commercial modernity has upon such female performativity. The construction of a female representative of a nation (i.e. Corinne *is* 'Italy', Glorvina *is* 'Ireland') was both an enabling and disabling process for female writers. As Maturin would point out constantly, for him these signifiers of national 'authenticity' were compromised by their location within a literary marketplace. As critics have demonstrated, the gender politics involved in concern about the market for

novels became a particularly important sphere in which the image of feminine cultural production was both problematised and highlighted.[5]

Part of the reason that the novel as a form that had been progressively feminised during the period in terms of both authorship and audience was due to the fact that it relied at least to some extent on presenting, either negatively or positively, characters with heightened sensibilities. Most obviously in the exaggerated psychopathology apparent in the Gothic tradition of Ann Radcliffe, female subjectivity was focused on as a method of elucidating the moral value (or danger) of refined sensibility. Radcliffe's Emily St Aubert in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is introduced as having "[an] uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was an observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace" (5).

In Radcliffe and by extension the Gothic genre at large, such a sensibility was ahistorical and non-national. This allowed Radcliffe to portray life in sixteenth-century Italy as similar in sentiment to eighteenth-century England. Anachronism is essential as sensibility was not historically or nationally particularised. So, although the Gothic dealt with historical periods remote from its audience's experience (the sixteenth-century in the case of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*), it was not similar to the 'historical novel' of the nineteenth century. For Radcliffe, sensibility was trans-historical and trans-national. The point was that it was a universal human trait,

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[5] See Ina Ferris *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), Nicola Watson *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), Anne K. Mellor 'A Novel of their Own: Romantic Women's Fiction 1790-1815' in *The Columbia History of the British Novel* ed. John Richetti vol. Xix (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 327-51.

unencumbered by the particular. As Ian Duncan points out, the Gothic romances of Radcliffe were not 'historical' in the sense of Walter Scott's novels but instead deliberately reduced the difference between different periods and locations:

> [The Gothic novel] invokes historical contingency in order to dramatize its reduction under persistent forms of sexual and familial identity. In this way, then, the other time and place is our own. Through the strategic exoticism of the present of the costume and setting we read the figure of the present, and are bound in the spell of simultaneous familiarity and strangeness. (26)

As James Watt has noted, many of Radcliffe's critics were willing to forgive the anachronisms in her text "so that they would not interfere with the pleasure she provided" (123). Maturin, however, despite his obvious admiration and indebtedness to Radcliffe, identified the anachronistic element in her fiction in an essay on fiction published in 1817:

> Her monks and nuns always inhabit the same convent; her French peeresses, in the reign of Henry III, have all the frivolity and esprit de société of a Parisian belle of the eighteenth century; and the savage peasant of the Highlands of Scotland, in the feudal age, assigns as his reason for joining the standard of a warlike chief, that the Fitzhenrys (*the Fitzhenrys in Scotland*) "were always friends to *virtue*"; of the meaning of which term, we may even charitably presume, the savage follower of a feudal lord, at that period, was as ignorant as an Eskimaux of the problems of Euclid. ('Novel-writing': 48 Italics in original)

For Maturin, virtue and sentiment in Radcliffe's 'romances' are not particularised to a national or temporal specificity. The form of sensibility that is displayed remains outside of any sense of historical progression. It remains static and ahistorical. Eighteenth century sensibility and concepts of a moral sense become anachronistic within this fiction, as there is a disjunction between the characters' sensibility and the historical setting. It is

also a fiction that claims universality for such a sensibility. This leads to a subsuming of national differences underneath a concept of 'virtue'- where virtue is differentiated from its classical republican overtones and instead linked to female sexuality.

In *Corinne*, Madame De Staël was to present a version of female sensibility which stressed the important cultural and national function of feminine identity to national self-definition. However, De Staël's extended discussion of national types and attitudes is itself complicated by the interplay between romantic nationalist allegory and a wider European cosmopolitanism. In effect, *Corinne*'s deployment of female performative cultural production is the transforming element, for it points to the very adaptability of such trans-national tropes of aesthetic sensibility to specifically national ends. For Corinne, and before her, Glorvina, to become representatives of a nation they must partake of what had been a universal ideal of sensibility. The paradox of the feminine national identity is that it is founded on a supposed international set of cultural/aesthetic prescriptions. In order to create an image of nationality, in other words, Owenson and De Staël had first to master a set of tropes that passed over national boundaries. In their attempts to "nationalize the sentimental heroine" (Watson: 111) Owenson and, particularly, De Staël particularised feminine sensibility. By this I mean that in *The Wild Irish Girl* and *Corinne* there is a recognition of the actual historical and national moment in which these cultural and sentimental performances occur, whether that be the 1798 rebellion and consequent Act of Union, or the Napoleonic re-drawing of Europe.

In order to observe whether this process has a point of origin in De Staël's *Corinne* it will be necessary to examine that novel's problematic construction of national identity out of an enlightened European cosmopolitanism. As well as this, we must examine the extent to which Corinne as a character is engaged in the creation of a public sphere which, ironically, will be hostile to her own status as the woman of genius. To understand why the society that Corinne creates excludes her, we need to return to the relationship between the bourgeois public sphere as elucidated by Habermas and its necessary foundation, the private sphere of the house. As has already been noted, Habermas' formulation has been subsequently problematised by a number of historians and theorists. In this area, it is fruitful to bear in mind some feminist criticism of Habermas' theorisation:

> Far from being worlds apart, as is suggested by the terminology of separate spheres, the emerging conceptions of public and private were powerfully reinforcing and deeply entangled. (Landes *Visualizing*: 137)

Such recognition is nascent in Habermas' work. It will be argued that in *Corinne* we have the beginning of such a recognition of the economics of gender in the formation of a public (and national) sphere. The equivalence of a public and national sphere becomes problematic in the two novels we will look at. Just as Habermas locates the newspaper as a vitally constitutive organ of the public sphere, Benedict Anderson similarly locates print-capitalism as important in creating the 'imagined community' of the nation. The public and national spheres in *Corinne* and *Women* exist in troubled relationship due to the very divergence between the space in which the nation imagines itself and the actual space in which the state regulates itself.

Born to an Italian mother and English father, Corinne is taken away from the maternal homeland she will later represent for an England that is rigid, patriarchal, and lacking in aesthetic sensibility. As Doris Y. Kadish points out:

> Italy stands in sharp contrast with England, which is depicted in *Corinne* as embodying an aristocratic commitment to the past, family lines, and property. (117)

Significantly, the Italian mother dies, leaving not property but a particular cultural and aesthetic identity to her daughter (the idea of the matrilineal passing of sensibility will become increasingly problematic in *Women*). After a bleak period in England, Corinne returns to Italy, leaving behind her father's surname. She amasses a fortune (and it is again important to note that this fortune is not consequent upon property) and fame in the country of her lost mother. It is at this point that the novel opens and Lord Oswald Nelvil sees Corinne crowned with the laurel wreath in Rome.

Corinne is not simply a producer of cultural capital, a talented performer, but consolidates an idealised version of Italian nationality:

> [The Italians] say to foreigners, 'Look at her, she is the image of our beautiful Italy; she is what we would be but for the ignorance, the envy, the discord, and indolence to which our fate has condemned us.'...And when foreigners talk ill of this land which gave birth to the great minds that have enlightened Europe, when they have no pity for our failings which arise from our misfortunes, we say to them: 'Look at Corinne.' (27)

Nancy K. Miller has referred to *Corinne, or Italy* as an "enigmatically [titled]" (163) work. For Miller, the emphasis on Corinne as both object and subject of the act of looking problematises the extent to which a clear feminist politics can be recovered from the text. Leaving aside, for a moment, the gender politics that are deployed in the novel, the title can be

seen as open and unresolved in the issue of national identities that are presented in the text. In other words, we can see a disjunction between the signifier Corinne as it appears in the title of the work, and Corinne, the character, as she is revealed in the book. In the title Corinne and Italy are placed in a synchronous orbit, presented each as analogues to the other. Both Corinne and Italy, "the maternal landscape," (Miller: 172) can stand as interchangeable entities. Corinne *is* Italy, and the early passages in the novel seem to compound this simple equivalence. However, what the early passages point out is the extent to which Corinne publicly performs this connection. Rather than being presented as something essential, it is in fact contingent on theatrical performance.

Apart from the scene at the Capitol, in which the symbolic national resonance of Corinne is most powerfully felt, the preliminary courtship between Oswald and Corinne is presented as facing difficulties precisely due to the inflexibility of national character. National sentiment and patriotism is problematic, and Corinne feels the need to apologise for her own love for (and, by extension, identification with) Italy:

> I repeat, my Lord, forgive me this love for my country, which makes me want to make it loved by a man such as you, and do not judge with English severity the gestures of goodwill that an Italian woman feels able to make...(51)

It is important to stress, however, that Corinne's ability to become, in effect, a personification of Italy is due to an education which develops and takes account of her English upbringing. In other words, Corinne's inter-nationalism allows her to take on the mantle of the romantic nationalist icon:

> The depth of thought and feeling which is characteristic of [English] poets had strengthened my mind and soul without my losing any of the lively imagination which seems to

> belong only to the inhabitants of our southern lands. I could therefore think that it was my destiny to have peculiar advantages because of my dual education and, if I may put it that way, two different nationalities. (256)

It is no coincidence that Corinne's lover, Lord Nelvil, will be an Anglo-Scot, someone who will also represent a form of dual nationality. Corinne becomes something more than an interchangeable sign for Italy. Where the title suggested an almost too easy identification of nation and individual, the text subsequently carries forth, to a point, a more subtle examination of national types, owing a great deal to a cosmopolitan conception of trans-national cultural sensibility. Both Corinne and Nelvil can become lovers because of a sensibility, located in cultural production and appreciation, that crosses boundaries. The Romantic nationalist plot is complicated by an internationalism that owes more to Enlightenment ideas of a republic of letters transcending national/state territories. The 'republic of letters' is present as an echo in the text. Just as David Hume could write to a foreign correspondent that "[their] connection with each other as men of letters is greater than [their] difference as adhering to different sects or systems" (quoted in Christensen: 10), De Staël seems to complicate her work's initial promise of national essentialism by positing a republic of aesthetic sentiment, wherein Corinne and Oswald escape their respective national identities through a shared appreciation of cultural productions.[6] Significant national differences are subsumed rather than erased by a sensibility that overcomes national differences:

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[6] It could be argued that a similar referencing of eighteenth-century ideas of enlightened cosmopolitanism is behind the, albeit skewed, epistolary form of Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*. In that novel, of course, the term 'man of letters' is open to a particularly literal reading as the *only* letters that are presented are authored by men.

> Between Oswald and Corinne, moreover, there was an unusual, all-powerful fellow-feeling. Their tastes were not the same, their opinions rarely coincided, nevertheless in the bottom of their hearts there were similar mysteries, emotions derived from the same source, in short, an indefinable similarity which presupposed similar natures, although all the external conditions had moulded them differently. (269)

The insistence on some mysterious similarity between them in spite of external (national?) differences highlights the extent to which *Corinne* is at least partly activated by a form of Enlightenment universalism, an important factor in the creation of a cosmopolitan pan-European outlook. The mysterious element that allows Corinne and Nelvil to have this connection is a variation on the conception of sensibility as a universal facet of human nature that Radcliffe presented.

What is initially presented as a simple dyadic opposition between national types is complicated by Corinne and Oswald's relationship and then the revelation of Corinne's English upbringing. Indeed, the novel's tragedy lies in Lord Nelvil choosing for his wife the 'purely' English Lucile, a choice which leads to Corinne's death and an equivocal domestic ending for Nelvil. The example of Corinne herself suggests that refined aesthetic and cultural production, consequent initially on a heightened sensibility, is most adequately developed through the dialectical opposition of nationalities, rather than through ossification in a monological conception of the nation. The central irony therefore is that Corinne's ability to stand as an alternative sign for the cultural/national entity 'Italy', can only come about through her lack of any single essentialist national identity. The progressive downplaying of Italy as a symbolic locus of such aesthetic markers of sensibility that Kadish identifies may have less to do with allegorical

identification of Italy as Revolutionary France, and more to do with a move away from the initial presentation of monological national identities towards the revelation of Corinne's cultural hybridity and the cementing of the bond between her and Oswald. It is at this point, just before Oswald's departure for England, that Rome, previously the site of grand historical and aesthetic display, becomes a pestilential place, somewhere that must be avoided due to the "fatal air"(275).

As has been suggested, though, cosmopolitanism is only carried to a point in *Corinne*. The tragic denouement is due to Oswald's choice of the English Lucile, Corinne's half-sister. As well as this is the need Oswald feels to fight for his country:

> 'So you are going to England without me?' Oswald was silent...'Thanks to your care, I have regained the life that I nearly lost,' replied Oswald. 'That life now belongs to my country in wartime.' (266)

The demands that the Napoleonic wars put on nationality breaks the internationalism that has previously been espoused. Oswald rejects Corinne, who has been revealed as a hybrid blend of nationalities, for Lucile and England. In effect, Lucile becomes the type of easy marker of national identity that Corinne had been previously. In contrast to *Corinne, or Italy*, we are now presented with *Lucile, or England.* Lucile's modesty becomes important to the stability of the state, as it allows a Burkean domesticity. Oswald's wartime patriotism demands that he reject the performative cultural form of nationality that Corinne represents, for the stable, simple one that Lucille is part of, in which there is a much greater emphasis on the state and its institutions. Oswald's motivations, including patriotism, respect for his dead father, and his obligations to the property he inherits, lead him

to choose a nationality that has a definite political and military agency. He eventually chooses a much more Burkean ideal of nationhood, with an adaptation of the classical republican emphasis on the military role of the citizen and the non-public role of women. Lucille operates in a different way to Corinne, therefore, in that she can still act as representative of a nation but her representative role is much more firmly placed within a patriarchal system of state authority.

At one point, a friend of Lord Nelvil presents the post-Revolutionary constellation of European nations as one in which the very idea of national identity has become problematised; "[There] is no France any longer. The ideas and feelings that made me love it no longer exist" (208). In a Napoleonic Europe in which national borders were undergoing violent redrawing, Corinne's initial acts of national production are both symptomatic of the wider conflict of nations, yet suggest that the very mingling of nations might produce a reconstituted national identity. But as has been suggested, true internationalism ironically becomes strained beyond bearing by the Napoleonic conquest of Europe. As has been suggested, the novel's tragedy lies in Oswald's choice of an English bride, a choice that has been partly made for him by outside historical pressures. Napoleonic internationalism destroys the possibility of trans-national identification. Corinne's 'dual nationalities' are rejected for simple identification.

De Staël's pivotal, and paradoxical, role in creating and publicising a form of Romantic nationalism was recognised by the time she died in 1817:

> The sciences have always owed their origin to some great spirit. Smith created political economy – Linnaeus, botany –

> Lavoisier, chemistry – and Madame De Staël has, in like manner, created the art of analysing the spirit of nations, and the springs which move them. To whatever extent the advancement of this science may, in the course of time, be pushed, the glory of having been its author must ever remain with Madame De Staël. ('Chateau': 278-279)

Before Maturin's novels can be examined in relation to De Staël's *Corinne*, though, the extent to which De Staël links national creation and female agency must be considered. If Corinne's status as national signifier can be seen as problematical, her status as performer (and thus producer) of national culture is more transparent. Corinne's role of cultural producer, though, is the cause of her rejection due to its basis in her own cultural hybridity. She ends her life with a song that confirms her identification with Italy ("So farewell, my country, so, farewell the country where I saw the light of day." [401]), an identification that was indirectly responsible for her rejection by Oswald.

Female agency works on two particular levels in the novel. On the one hand, it is central in the self-definition of national identity. At one level, Corinne acts as both producer and symbol of Italy. As has been already suggested, there is, at least initially, a direct link made between Corinne and Italy, much as Owenson had suggested a direct link between Ireland and Glorvina. On another level, however, female agency acts outwith the traditional social forms of organisation that are particularly associated with England in the novel. Matrilineal succession is presented as a distinct alternative to a patriarchal form of succession. Sensibility, as opposed to property, is what is handed down in this schema, and this sensibility is shown as central to the cultural and symbolic accretion of national identity. Property, therefore, is not the sole guarantor of stability

that it was to Burke, but merely an element that needs cultural legitimisation by the feminine.

It has already been noted that a similar proposal is at the heart of Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*. In that novel, the Englishman's claims to Irishness can only be acknowledged once he has married a repository of some 'spirit' of Irishness. Legal rights are void without access to a feminised national culture. There is one major difference, though, between the presentation of female genius in *The Wild Irish Girl* and in *Corinne*. Whereas in Owenson's novel Glorvina remains materially destitute while culturally 'rich', in *Corinne* artistic and cultural genius allows for the acquisition of a fortune that is independent of property. Corinne is a producer of cultural 'riches' within a society in which cultural performance can lead directly to material wealth. For this to happen another important break must be made from the Glorvina model. In *Corinne,* performance is a public act. Corinne's performances take place in a public space. In *The Wild Irish Girl* performances are, for the most part, of a private nature. The first appearance of Corinne is at a highly public procession in the centre of a large city. Glorvina is caught in a pre-modern, pre-economic chronotope; Corinne's wealth is due to the material wealth that accompanies a commercial modernity. The economic exchange-value of cultural productions, along with the consequent political/national implications of public performance, is implicitly confirmed. It is this which leads to the aforementioned historicisation of sensibility. Sensibility becomes confined to the aesthetic once the aesthetic becomes open to a commercial market. As Philip Connell writes:

> [Our] inherited sense of the incompatibility between literary sensibility and economic science has obscured the extent to which early nineteenth-century political economy, and the debate on its legitimacy, scope, and function, played a formative role in the emergence of the idea of 'culture' itself as a humanistic or spiritual resource resistant to the intellectual enervation produced by modern, commercial societies. (7)

Two things must be kept in mind, therefore, when we examine the role female agency has in the novel. Primarily, following on from the earlier comments on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, we must consider the interrelationships between various forms of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic, and political) in the novel, and recognise that to some extent Corinne's curse is that certain kinds of capital are not transferable from one field of social/cultural relations to another. Allied to this, and following on from it, is the question of the role of a woman like Corinne (and by extension Armida, Zaira, Glorvina, and even Madame De Staël herself) within the public space of the state. It is necessary to recognise that Corinne is both an agent in the creation of a (specifically Italian and national) public sphere, yet the continued existence of that public sphere becomes dependent her loss of agency. As Susan Tenenbaum has put it:

> [The] exceptional woman served as a dynamic agent of social progress. Overstepping the boundaries of domesticity, she is privy to truths lying beyond social convention; unrestrained in her thoughts and actions, she is a permanent catalyst to change. The very dynamism of her presence, however, required that her role be circumscribed. The conservative forces of society must ultimately prevail, ensuring continuity of the essential structures of liberal society. (46)

We can rephrase Tenenbaum's insight by suggesting that the exceptional woman at once grants to the nation a collective identity with a sense of its own dignity – its worth as an end in itself. The nation thus is

able to see itself as having a unique worth, and formulate its place within a larger historical narrative. Ironically though, the historical narrative that nationalism creates will only find completion in the formation of the nation-state. To again refer to Eagleton:

> The nation-state does not unqualifiedly celebrate the idea of culture. On the contrary, any particular national or ethnic culture will come into its own only through the unifying principle of the state, not under its own steam. Cultures are intrinsically incomplete, and need the supplement of the state to become truly themselves. (59)

Yet, by opening the possibility of a progressive narrative of the nation, the woman of genius removes herself from any sense of diachronic development. Corinne dies simply because she is not in harmony with a society that demands a particular role of for women. The type of femininity that she represents can not exist as a social or political agent once the initial act of imagining the national culture is performed. State-formation necessitates the marginalisation of heightened sensibility within some static aesthetic representation. Ahistorical images of feminine *genius loci* become central to bourgeois nationalist movements, but that does not mean that such movements encourage a public role for women.

To examine how this occurs in *Corinne, or Italy* it is important to consider the already mentioned relations between Corinne's status as cultural producer and how that relates to her level of political/historical agency. To examine this we might want to consider Bourdieu's theorisation of the social space as one of relations between agents in particular fields:

> In so far as the properties chosen to construct this space are active properties, the space can also be described as a field of forces: in other words, as a set of objective power relations imposed on all who enter this field, relations which are not reducible to the intentions of individual agents or even to

> direct *interactions* between agents. (*Language*: 232 Italics in original)

If we consider the social space of *Corinne* as a field of active properties and forces, it further elucidates the *relative* nature of power in the novel. While Corinne and Nelvil both possess certain types of capital, the novel engages with the extent to which certain types of capital are translatable into power in the social space. If Corinne has an impact on the social sphere in the novel, it is predicated on a public that will pay to see her. Corinne's agency is therefore predicated on an audience willing to consume the cultural commodities she produces. As with Glorvina though, Corinne does not produce material goods. Her chief talent lies in improvisation, so that she is even apart from the realm of print media. Her capital is entirely based on her performances and has a precarious position in the field of agency in the public space. The symbolic capital she has rests on performance. We can see a possible link between Judith Butler and Bourdieu here, as both argue on the method by which a particular form of identity rests on performance (ritual) and recognition. Symbolic capital is recognised in the performative act. As noted, though, Corinne actually theatricalizes the act of performance itself, self-consciously showing how identity and symbolic capital is created through a literal performance. Both Butler and Bourdieu are concerned with the level of agency that comes from the performance.

Bourdieu's conception of symbolic and cultural capital is useful in reading *Corinne*. For Bourdieu, aesthetic appreciation is never a purely innocent affair:

> A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded…[The] encounter with a work of art is

> not 'love at first sight' as is generally supposed, and the act of empathy, *Einfühlung*, which is the art-lover's pleasure, presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code. (*Distinction*: 2-3)

Or, to put it more simply "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (*Distinction*: 6). For Bourdieu, appreciation of the work of art is a highly cognitive as opposed to emotional process. It is also an act that has inevitable class connotations. Taste becomes something that is learned rather than innate, and something that is specifically linked to social formations rather than an abstract ideal. As has already been remarked, it is precisely the ability to decipher a particular 'code' of aesthetic sentiment that allows Corinne and Nelvil to see each other as companions. In this case, however, it is stressed that their recognition is non-cognitive in nature. However, the first view of Corinne's apartment signifies both the elevation of her character within a cultural field and thus gives an indication to Oswald as to Corinne's nobility, a form of nobility not based on land but on taste:

> The view of the Tiber enhanced the beauty of the house, and its interior was elegantly decorated in the most perfect taste…As [Oswald] waited for her, he walked up and down in her rooms, and in every detail he noticed an agreeable mixture of everything that is most pleasing in the three nations, French, English, and Italian, the taste for social life, the love of literature, and the appreciation of the arts. (37)

Corinne possesses cultural capital, and for her that has been translatable into an economic capital which is not tied to property. It is through his appreciation of Corinne's taste and how this operates within the acquirement of actual material goods that Oswald comes to appreciate her social standing. Corinne's apartment comes to function as a form of salon, and it

partakes of some of the attributes of the (pre-Revolutionary) salon that have been noted by Joan Landes:

> [The salon] was distinguished by its 'worldliness', its cosmopolitan character. And it was a factor in the important evolution of the status system toward money and away from land. (*Women and the Public Sphere:* 25)

There are two things to note about Landes' comment on the salon. The first is that it marks a move from landed to mobile property, and as such is important when we remember that Corinne's inheritance is markedly different from the kind outlined by Burke. The second thing to note is that the internationalism of Corinne's apartment is stressed. While this further enhances the theme of enlightened cosmopolitanism with which Corinne as a character is associated, it also sets up an interesting and potentially debilitating contrast to her public self. As has been noticed, Corinne functions in public as a figure of an idealised Italian self-identity. There is the potential for conflict between her role as *genius loci* in public and enlightened *salonierre* in private. It is this, along with the lack of opportunity to transfer economic and cultural capital into political and historical agency, which causes both *Corinne* the novel and Corinne the character to descend into tragedy.

To understand the inability of Corinne to transfer cultural acumen into political/historical agency it is important to focus on the implicit characterisation of the public sphere by Habermas (a characterisation already noted to have been developed by some of his critics) as a text-based sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere has as its foundation an economy of material textual practices that allow private individuals as members of a larger public. The public sphere not only requires an economy of cultural

goods, but also a forum for discussion. While conversation is the putative original point of public interaction, Habermas' public sphere is one "whose decisive mark was the published word" (16). I have already suggested that Jon Klancher's reading of periodical literature has shown how the role of conversation and public space in public discussion became internalised within the periodical form itself. The public sphere for Klancher became accessible through print-media. Contrasting two important processional scenes that occur in *Corinne* may help suggest the position of Corinne as regards political agency in a modern (print-capitalist) state. Oswald's first knowledge of Corinne is learned through overhearing people talk in an open, urban space:

> Oswald went out to go to the public square. There he heard people talk about Corinne, about her talent and her genius. The streets she was to pass through had been decorated. The ordinary people, who usually foregather only to see the wealthy or powerful go by, were almost clamouring to see someone distinguished only by her mental powers. (21)

When Corinne arrives in England, however, knowledge about Oswald is transmitted in a different way: "When she reached England, Corinne learned from the news-sheets that the departure of Lord Nelvil's regiment was delayed still further." (326)

In the first scene, an open public space is presented in which display is focused on the performance of symbolic capital. Corinne is distinguished by her own abilities as opposed to her economic or social power. Knowledge of Corinne, however, is transmitted through 'talk'. It is also to be noted that all of Corinne's public acts are primarily non-textual. Her chief talent of improvisation is founded on a non-textual transmission of knowledge. Corinne is presented as initially outside textual discourse. The

public space that Corinne is associated with is based on forms of cultural and affective transmission that do not require a print-media. The crowd's detailing of Corinne's talents enforces her identification with many different visual and aural arts:

> One said that she had the most moving voice in Italy, another that no one performed tragedy like her, yet another that she danced like a nymph and that her drawings were as charming as they were original. (22)

While critics have pointed out the basis that Corinne's performances have in an oral culture,[7] it is important to contrast the initial presentation of Corinne in the Capitol with the processional nature of the military review she will observe in England. Not only must the non-textual nature of Corinne's first appearance be kept in mind, but also the association made between Oswald and English society with 'news-sheets'. Focusing on these elements will further elucidate the extent to which Corinne both creates a discourse and is thus excluded from it.

If the first thing that Corinne does when she reaches England is read, it is not the first association she has with the written word. The revelation of her upbringing, after all, is contained within a letter sent to Oswald. England, and Corinne's 'Englishness', is based on a form of textuality. The procession at which the affection of Oswald for Lucile is confirmed echoes the procession at which Corinne was first presented, but in this case the role of observer changes:

> She heard that his regiment was to march past, the next day, in Hyde Park [....] She had barely appeared at Hyde Park when she saw Oswald appear at the head of his regiment. In his uniform he had the most handsome and imposing

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[7] See *Germaine De Staël: Crossing the Borders* Madelyn Gutwirth, Avriel Goldberger, and Karyna Szmurlo (eds.) (New Brunswick N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991)

> appearance in the world. He guided his horse with perfect skill and elegance. The music that could be heard had something simultaneously proud and gentle about it, nobly commanding sacrifice of one's life. Crowds of men, elegantly and simply dressed, bore the stamp of male virtues on their faces, while beautiful, modest women bore that of the virtues of timidity. The soldiers of Oswald's regiment seemed to look at him with trust and devotion. They played the famous tune, *God Save the King*, which touches all hearts so deeply in England. (333-334)

Not only has the role of spectator changed, but the conception of nationality has as well. From being something that could be produced in the aesthetic realm by a woman of genius, nationality now is militaristic and ordered along rigidly demarcated gender lines. The expression of nationality has moved from Corinne's culturally determined feminised one, to a politically determined one in which the public space is used for a display of state-centred political and military strength. Not only is England the place of textuality, it is also the place of the modern state that exists in political institutions rather than in an eternal aestheticism. In England, Corinne will see Oswald and Lucile interact at the theatre and at the review. This clear demarcation between the loci of cultural and national production is implicitly contrasted with the first scene in Rome, where national self-definition is produced and consolidated by the woman of genius. In England we are presented with the logical consequence of a state-forming nationalism – a society clearly separated along gender lines.

To suggest that the public sphere is fundamentally activated by print-capitalism is to invoke not only Habermas but also, as already mentioned, the work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson, like Habermas, insists on the centrality of print-capitalism in the formation of the 'imagined community'

of the nation. For Anderson, printed media allow a disparate collection of individuals to imagine for themselves a collective identity as a nation:

> The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily up (or down) history. (26)

If print-capitalism is important in the formation of both a politically aware public and a nationally aware public, the operation of print-capitalism in a society in which there is a disparity between the state and the nation can lead to conflict. Corinne is a cultural nationalist precisely because she articulates through a non-print media an idealised version of nationality in a country that lacks a unitary state. Corinne is Italy, yet Italy as a state does not exist. The possible outcome of this is that in such a society the aestheticisation of national identity is always a political act. In the England of *Corinne*, the trappings of state replace the woman of genius as the locus of national identity. In Italy, however, there is paradoxical insistence on, on the one hand, the universal aspect of the aesthetic (as represented in the novel by Corinne's guided tour of Rome) and, on the other, the political and, one might say, performative aspect of the aesthetic. This performative aspect – in effect, Corinne's creation of 'Italy' through her cultural production of an idealised vision of Italy that she 'represents' – has a close analogue in Owenson's use of Glorvina to create an idealised embodiment of 'Ireland' that is amenable to a patriotic unionism. As already suggested, however, the nationalising of an image of sentimental feminine genius is complicated in *Corinne* by the very presence of the woman of genius within a viewing public. Owenson's restriction of her Gaelic princess to a non-specific Western locale, an idyllic and ahistorical chronotope cut off from the

modern world, might allow for a neutered national romance. When references to actual historical events such as 1798 occur in *The Wild Irish Girl*, they predominantly occur in footnotes. In *Corinne*, the place of the woman of genius within a modern society in which cultural performance has become commodified means that the material reality of her performance necessarily places her national act of creation within a historical context to a greater extent than in Owenson's fiction. Both authors open up the possibility of the nation becoming a state, yet implied in their fiction is the suggestion that the nation's accession to 'modern' statehood must lead to some diminishing of the role of feminine genius. The conflict therefore becomes one between the nation as a cultural ideal and the nation as political entity. In order for the latter to occur, there has to be a stabilisation of the contingent identity. In the context of early nineteenth century nationalism, political demands require a stable, foundationalist identity. Corinne is, ultimately, not national enough for nationalist political agency, as her ability to 'create' and 'represent' Italy rests on a dual nationality, an identity that is not reducible to one single stable element.

It is within this nexus of problems relating to the construction of national identity in the textual practices of the public space that this thesis will attempt to locate four of Maturin's novels. Maturin insisted on the national tale as a product of the commercial world. As opposed to Owenson's cultural determinism, Maturin presented a materialist critique of the circulation of images of feminine genius linked to national creation. After all, if immersion in an environment of cultural consumption led to some potential for political agency (albeit indirectly), then the possibility of

constructing a safe version of Irish national identity was complicated. *Corinne* encountered a series of paradoxes formed from the clash between the universalising impulse in aesthetic appreciation and the national and historical particularities that such an impulse could lead to. However, the creation of a version of Irish national identity that could be safely divorced from agrarian secret societies or the urban disturbances of 1803 was, for Maturin, highly complicated. On the one hand, the discourse of civic humanism, with its republican trappings, was intimately linked in Ireland with sedition after 1798. On the other hand, cultural nationalism relied for Maturin on the elision of the degree of influence that modern forms of cultural transmission were under from the marketplace. *The Wild Irish Boy* was involved in a materialist deconstruction of Owenson's ahistorical chronotope, pointing out the extent to which the marketplace would always compromise the national tale's project of proving the dignity of the native culture. *The Milesian Chief* would draw a connection between the romantic and unromantic aspects of rebellion, ultimately positing as its only recourse a type of nostalgic sentimentality that recognised its own artificiality. *Women* would place Ireland within a pan-European context, and argue that the far from being an isolated refuge of an ahistorical image of national sensibility, Ireland was the prime example of the dislocations that modernity could bring. In *Melmoth the Wanderer* historical memory itself is problematised, and folk culture is presented in such a way that it is detached from any putatively organic context once it becomes printed.

The image of the performing woman, a representation of cultural production and heightened sensibility, would be central to Maturin's Irish

fictions. I have chosen in this thesis to concentrate on four novels that clearly deal with the national tale and engage in the iconography and themes broached by Owenson. This approach is determined to a large extent by an examination of generic categories, and so for this reason I have not dealt in any great detail with *Fatal Revenge* or *The Albigenses*. Both novels contain much of great interest, but this thesis is concerned with Maturin's fictions that specifically use Ireland as an important location in their plots. As I am concerned with the national tale, I have also not dealt with Maturin's drama or sermons. Of course, a full study of Maturin's engagement with the field of cultural production would have to pay attention to drama, the form in which he was often forced to most drastically curtail his own vision in favour of a collaborative effort at presentation. However, while many interesting statements about national identity can be garnered from *Bertram* (1816), *Manuel* (1817) and *Fredolfo* (1819), this thesis is primarily concerned with Maturin's interactions with the national tale and questions of novelistic representation. The novel, after all, as a form was in many ways seen as much more relevant to debates about the commodification of culture than the theatre was in this particular period. In addition to *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808), *The Milesian Chief* (1812), *Women, or Pour et Contre* (1818), and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), I will also look briefly at an article written by Maturin in 1817 that gives an idiosyncratic history of novel-writing.

Ideology as interior design: Culture and commodification in *The Wild Irish Boy*

> Parodies, as we once before said, should be short – Mr Mathurin's [*sic*], though admirably sustained, is too long, and we may venture to say that the mask is never sufficiently removed – *we* know that the reverend author means to be merry at the expense of novel writers and portfolio pedants, but we regret to say that we have heard some people [mistook] his book for a serious production…
>
> - Unsigned review of *Women*, *Quarterly Review* XIX (1818): 328.

The sardonic irony of the *Quarterly Review*'s demolition of Maturin's fourth novel, *Women, or Pour et Contre* (1818), is, ironically enough, a useful place to start in looking at *The Wild Irish Boy*, his second. I would like to suggest that *The Wild Irish Boy* should be seen as having a parodic relationship to the novel it seems to be most directly referring to, Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*. In order to do this I would like to start from Linda Hutcheon's description of how parody operates.

1. The public nature of parody

For Hutcheon, the parodic text is not necessarily one that ridicules its referent:

> There is nothing in *parodia* that necessitates the inclusion of a concept of ridicule, as there is, for instance, in the joke or *burla* of burlesque. Parody, then, in its ironic 'trans-contextualization' and inversion, is repetition with difference. (32)

Parody, therefore, can be both critically constructive as well as destructive. What is important for Hutcheon is that parody only works when the text being parodied is recognised and known by the audience of the parody. Parody is inherently a public performance, the parodic text only working if the text parodied is known. *The Wild Irish Boy* would have less impact as a

title if *The Wild Irish Girl* had been unread or unrecognised. For Hutcheon, though, parody asks for a fundamental "reassessment of the process of textual production" (5). Parodic texts 'encode' their references and meanings, relying on an audience to 'decode' these statements and recognise the system of referentiality operating in the text (23-24, 84-99). As Hutcheon says, the parodic text acts as an 'enunciation'; "This enunciative act includes an addresser of the utterance, a receiver of it, a time and a place, discourses that precede and follow – in short, an entire context (23). It is as an enunciative act that we can see most clearly the method by which *The Wild Irish Boy* structures its relationship to Owenson's novel.

Hutcheon builds on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in the novel. For Bakhtin, parody is fundamental to the novel. The novel contains various different language forms that operate to complicate any single monologic utterance:

> The orientation of the word amid the utterances and languages of others, and all the specific phenomena connected with this orientation, takes an *artistic* significance in the novel style. Diversity of voices and heteroglossia enter the novel and organise themselves within it into a structured artistic system. This constitutes the distinguishing feature of the novel as a genre. (*Dialogic*: 300)

For Bakhtin, the novel has a parodic relationship with the epic, which is conceived as a monoglot utterance. When he says that the novel contains varieties of language he refers to language "not as a system of grammatical categories, but rather language as conceived as ideologically saturated" (271). The heteroglossia that the novel contains therefore suggest that the novel will be inherently parodic and intertextual, incapable of maintaining a singular ideological standpoint. We might need to develop Bakhtin's

statements about the novel before we come to look at the parodic interplay of texts in Maturin's novel, though. Firstly, and in common with Hutcheon, Bakhtin insists throughout that the various languages at play in the novel are "artistically structured" (*Dialogic*: 262). The degree of intentionality implied to the author here must be questioned as to some extent what Maturin is parodying is the ability of the author to produce texts that are structured by his own artistic individuality:

> This novel from its title purports to give some account of a country little known. I lament I have not had time to say any more of it; my heart was full of it, but I was compelled by the laws of this mode of composition to consult the pleasure of my readers, not my own. (I x)

For Maturin, the novel is structured by the demands of the audience. He cannot write of Ireland as "[the] fashionable materials for novel-writing" are incommensurable with what Owenson's novel had presented. What I would argue is that Maturin does not provide a direct parody of the national tale on a structural level (as Robert Miles notes, the wild Irish boy of the title is "neither very Irish nor very wild" [96]) but uses parody to question the assumptions about authenticity that underlie *The Wild Irish Girl*'s formulation of cultural agency.

In order to do this I would like to slightly alter Hutcheon's Foucauldian reading of parody by reference to Pierre Bourdieu. For Foucault, each individual work ('statement') enters a "field of strategic possibilities" (Foucault 'Archaeology': 320):

> This field is not the total of all the conflicting elements, nor is it an obscure unity divided against itself and refusing to recognise itself in the mask of each of its opponents; it is the law of formation and dispersion of all possible options. (320)

The individual work defines itself against all of the possible differences and diversities of statements and works within the field. As such, the text's place within a plurality of texts is hugely important in its self-definition. As Foucault writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

> [T]he statement, as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced. (118)

In order to understand the text (or, for Foucault, any statement), in other words, we must take into account what Mikhail Bakhtin calls its "dialogic undertones" (Bakhtin *Speech Genres*: 92) – that is, the responses to previous utterances which mould the work and which must be taken into account in any analysis of the utterance. Bourdieu has expanded Foucault's analysis, pointing out that while Foucault gives a persuasive reading of how discursive formations operate, he "refuses to look outside the 'field of discourse' for the explanatory principle of each of the discourses in the field" (Bourdieu *Field of Cultural*: 179).

Against Foucault's 'field of strategic possibilities,' Bourdieu proposes that "fields of cultural production propose to those who are involved in them a *space of possibles*" (*Field of Cultural*: 176). This space is what causes actors in the particular field to be, consciously or unconsciously, aware of "the universe of problems, references, intellectual benchmarks [...] that on must have in the back of one's mind in order to be in the game" (176). This leads Bourdieu to attack formalist and structuralist approaches to literary texts that focus on the work as an autonomous object free of historical, social, or economic determinants. Speaking of parody

specifically, Bourdieu argues that parody works as a break with previous orthodox art forms and is a means of "emancipation":

> In this case the newcomers 'get beyond' the dominant mode of thought and expression not by explicitly denouncing it but by repeating and reproducing it in a sociologically non-congruent context, which has the effect of rendering it incongruous or even absurd, simply by making it perceptible as the arbitrary convention it is. (*Field of Cultural*: 31)

This is a useful starting point, although we must keep in mind that the 'national tale' does not represent for Maturin the 'dominant mode' of thought. Rather, the economic and commercial determinants that he sees the national tale subject to are what he will refer to in *The Wild Irish Boy*. Parody as a form becomes hyper-conscious of its 'field of possibles' and requires an audience who can decode its messages. As noted, it can only be effective once it appears in the public domain. In fact, parody depends on the public domain for its existence. It is intimately linked to a literary marketplace. In its referencing of other works, it can be seen to be acutely aware of its audience, yet at the same time aware that the audience might fail to recognise the intention of the parody. Hutcheon argues that parody draws attention to the "*position* and *power* of the enunciating agent, the producer of the parody" (87-88). However, not only does parody draw attention to an 'authority' at work somewhere in the text, it also, in the case of Maturin's novel, draws attention to the authority of the reading public, the consumers of the finished product. This public is almost a specular construct in *The Wild Irish Boy*. Maturin repeatedly apologises for his work's deficiencies on the grounds that he is merely feeding a public appetite, yet he is careful to do so in a way that does not clearly implicate the reader. It is a double-faced apologia, castigating the public for compromising authorial dignity yet

carefully differentiating the reader of the text with that specular collective entity. The metropolitan audience becomes both the site of agency in the literary sphere and yet a strangely externalised authority. When the main character comments on a novelist his denunciation extends to a diatribe against all novel writers and readers:

> [A]ll his powers, whatever they *might* be, he is compelled to sacrifice to that preposterous appetite for the garbage of fashionable anecdote, which our novel readers demand; and with which our novel writers, if professional, are compelled to comply. (III 164 Italics in original)

In Owenson's work, Irish national grievances are compared to other colonial experiences, notably to Spanish subjugation of indigenous populations in South America. If, by doing this, *The Wild Irish Girl* sought to place Ireland within an imperial horizon that appealed to the sympathy of a metropolitan audience, Maturin places Ireland in an imperial horizon in which Ireland is presented as bound up in the commercial system of exchanges that empire brings with it. The same scenes of colonial domination in Spanish South America that Owenson refers to in *The Wild Irish Girl* will become the background for a fashionable fête in *The Wild Irish Boy*. Both novels draw parallels between Ireland and other sites of colonialism, somewhat complicating Stephen Howe's recent contention that "early Irish nationalists hardly ever identified their situation or cause with that of other, non-European subject people in the British Empire or beyond" (44).

The parody of Owenson's novel therefore works to draw attention to the economic determinants of its cultural production. The parody of *The Wild Irish Boy* is bleak indeed, pointing out the problematic construction of

Owenson's text. What Maturin asks is the extent to which the 'translational aesthetic', a term coined by Lloyd to describe the attempt to carry over "the essential spirit rather than the superficial forms" (*Anomalous*: 97) of Irish culture (specifically native Irish culture), is a creation of the market place. We have already seen how Owenson dealt with this problem through aligning reproductions of Irish primeval culture with modern forms of sensibility, allowing her to both act the role of the noble savage yet read Rousseau at the same time. This is highlighted in her preference for Macpherson's 'translations' of Ossian over the 'wild' originals, the former providing her with similar sentiments that she finds in the modern authors that Mortimer brings her. In *The Wild Irish Boy*, Maturin presents an attack on the modern literature of sensibility (particularly castigating Rousseau and what he calls 'modern philosophy') while also questioning the possibility of reproducing in a modern form a supposedly primeval culture. *The Wild Irish Boy* questions the political efficacy of Owenson's deployment of sentimental tropes in her novel. Maturin highlights *The Wild Irish Girl*'s generic similarity to the fashionable novel as represented in his novel by the foremost (male) proponent of that genre, Thomas Skinner Surr. The inherent capriciousness of that genre and its (perceived) abject surrender to market demands are criticised and commented on in order to point out the problems of attempting to formulate an Irish national character within a genre determined by audience expectation. Owenson's labelling of her novel as 'A National Tale' is deconstructed, returning her attempt at transcendent self-definition to its originary position in a commercial and volatile novel trade. By concentrating on the fashionable novel's

engagement with imperial commerce, Maturin asks us to view Ireland not as equivalent to other colonies in Owenson's terms of injured sensibilities, but as open to the same processes of capitalist exploitation by a metropolitan audience. Empire, in other words, moves from being concerned with the transactions of symbolic capital to economic capital. The culture that is trumpeted in *The Wild Irish Girl* is put on a par with the trade in commodities for a fashionable audience. The independence of the fashionable novelist is denied in *The Wild Irish Boy* and, by extension, so is the independence of Owenson's version of Irishness. The differentiation between 'the sons of trade' and 'the sons of song' that we saw in Owenson's novel, already problematised, is negated by *The Wild Irish Boy*, in which the process of belief that gives the national tale its symbolic capital is reduced to a matter of taste. When one character consults a fashionable book on interior design to decide whether she should choose green or orange drapery for her room any possibility of transcendent collective identity is brought down to the shop floor.

So by suggesting that Maturin parodies Owenson's novel I am seeking to complicate readings that have suggested that he was merely trying to 'cash in' on the success of *The Wild Irish Girl* (for instance, Zimmermann *Irish Storyteller*: 234). According to Robert E. Lougy, Maturin "undoubtedly hoped to capitalize on the success that Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* had enjoyed the previous year" (23). The popularity of *The Wild Irish Girl* was, of course, centrally important to Maturin. As suggested, parody loses its force if what is being parodied is too obscure to be recognised. However, dismissing *The Wild Irish Boy* as a mere attempt

by Maturin to be carried along on Owenson's coat-tails is too reductive. I hope that my argument will supplement rather than contradict Jacqueline Pearson's proposition that *The Wild Irish Boy* "cannot be understood except in the context of its purposeful borrowing from, resistance to, and remaking of, female-authored models" (635). Pearson considers the novel to be engaged in the "politico-cultural enterprise of masculinizing the novel [form]" (635). By this she means that *The Wild Irish Boy* recognises and attempts to subvert the perceived dominance of women writers in the production of novels. Using Ina Ferris' work on the strategies by which Sir Walter Scott made the novel 'safe' for men to read and write (Ferris *Achievement*), Pearson delivers an eloquent and persuasive account of the reasons governing Maturin's allusiveness. She acknowledges that *The Wild Irish Boy* can be read as a parody of Owenson "by showing what happens if individuals simply act on their own desires" (645).

What I hope to add is a reading that recognises the political ends of Maturin's deployment of parody. By pointing out the material determinants in the production of texts Maturin is in fact providing a conservative critique of Owenson's novel. There is an important Burkean element to *The Wild Irish Boy*, and as such it can be seen so be deploying parody to conservative ends. This is hardly an unusual feature of parody in the Romantic period. Indeed, parodies in this period "span the ideological gamut from the *Anti-Jacobin* [from 1797-1798 in particular] to John Thelwall" (Strachan). As Hutcheon acknowledges, parody, paradoxically, can be both "normative and conservative, or it can be provocative and revolutionary" (76). In the case of *The Wild Irish Boy* this paradox causes difficulties in interpretation. On one

level it appears to be a familiar denunciation of 'Jacobin' politics and their representation in literature. So, for instance, when Maturin presents us with the drunk, immoral and atheistic libertine Lionel Bethel, the astute reader sees this as a conflation of the names of the principle letter writers in Charlotte Smith's pro-Revolutionary novel *Desmond* (1792), Lionel Desmond and Erasmus Bethel. *The Wild Irish Boy* contains explicit denunciations of the radical literature of the 1790s:

> The whole of our library at home consisted of the works of the modern philosophers, and the French writers, who a few years before the revolution, had excited the thirst of outrage and innovation, which could afterwards be only quenched by blood. When I wished for solid reading, I was presented with Godwin's Political Justice, Mrs. Wolstonecroft's [*sic*] Rights of Woman, Rousseau's Contrat Social, or Voltaire's Dictionnaire Philosophique. If I wished for lighter reading, I had only Voltaire's or the King of Prussia's bad verses against the Immortality of the Soul, or the insipid and infamous novels of Rousseau, Crebillon, or Diderot. (I 262-263)

As such, it seems to be a late example of what M. O. Grenby has called the "anti-Jacobin novel". Central to Maturin's conservatism is his allusiveness, which operates as parody in the case of Owenson by presenting the implications of consumerism on the national tale.

In *The Wild Irish Girl* Owenson appropriated Burke's anti-Jacobin rhetoric, particularly the image of Marie Antoinette, to argue for feminine cultural agency in the definition of the nation. In *The Wild Irish Boy* Maturin will instead present his female characters as caught up both in dangerous habits of reading and, more importantly, as cultural consumers. Femininity, therefore, moves from being a site of cultural production in De Staël's fiction and *The Wild Irish Girl* to a site of cultural consumption in *The Wild Irish Boy*. Pearson suggests that in Maturin's novel Owenson

becomes "not a powerful predecessor on political and national themes, but only a dress-designer" (642). Pearson is here referring to a scene in *The Wild Irish Boy* in which Lady Montrevor, a *doyenne* of the fashionable world and sometime object of the hero's love, appears at a London masquerade in the costume of "*Glorvina, in the Wild Irish Girl* ...[giving] a ludricous [sic] description of the *natural* productions of the country from which she said she was just arrived" (III 356 Italics in original). Glorvina, the central mediator between an antique Irish culture and a modern sensibility is associated here not with a transcendence and romance but with costume and the London *beau monde*. The word 'natural', central to Mortimer's appreciation of Glorvina in *The Wild Irish Girl*, is deliberately and heavily ironized. We are left in no doubt about the unnatural production that we are seeing in the fashionable world. However, equally important is the previous costume worn by Lady Montrevor:

> But all eyes were dazzled, and all hearts captivated, by the blaze of attraction and sensibility exhibited by the still *too beautiful* Lady Montrevor, in the costume of the celebrated 'La Valiere,' as she appears in the picture of the Orleans Gallery, in the act of renouncing all the splendors of luxury, and all the blandishments of the world, 'which she loved too well.' (Iii 351-352 Italics in original)

Lady Montrevor appropriates one of the central images of French republican iconography, and subverts the original's classical republican ideal of the surrender of self-interest and 'luxury'. Here, a symbol of republican idealism, antithetical to consumerism, is transformed into a costume for a fashionable ball. The ironic reference to the painting of La Valiere and the cultural institution in which it resides again points out the problematic relationship between the aesthetic and the commercial. Lady Montrevor

dresses as a representation of a republican ideal of the abjuration of luxury, yet in effect represents luxury herself. What occurs in these scenes is that the symbolic capital of the originals is erased. It is Lady Montrevor who decides between green and orange drapery by consulting a book by the fashionable writer on interior décor, Thomas Hope:

> "I hardly know which to prefer for this cabinet; orange drapery to correspond with the antiques in the cornice – or dark green, as the chimney-piece is of verde-antico. I believe we must consult Hope…" (III 315-316)

Powerful markers of sectarian difference have been reduced to a choice determined by a fashionable book on furniture. Ideology has become a matter of interior design.

2. Sensibility and popular literature: Maturin's use of Surr's *A Winter in London*

As Pearson notes, there is a move in *The Wild Irish Boy* from a female-authored epistolary novel to a male authored first-person narrative (641). The narrative of Ormsby Bethel recounts his life from an orphanage in France through to his residence in London, before moving on to his move to Ireland and gradual infatuation with Lady Montrevor. A marriage is arranged by his 'Milesian' uncle for him with Lady Montrevor's daughter, Athanasia, and after a series of romantic entanglements, centred mostly on the fashionable world of London, when Ormsby comes close to losing his fortune through an addiction to gambling and an affair with a married woman, he returns to Ireland and learns to love his wife and manage his estate. Numerous sub-plots involve a revealed inheritance, a 'Milesian' uncle, and Lady Montrevor's recounting of her life.

The Wild Irish Boy is structurally askew, beginning as an epistolary novel before moving on to a first person narrative. The novel begins with a letter from Jane St. Clair to her niece, Elmaide. Maturin had noted in his preface that his first novel, *Fatal Revenge* had been found "to be too defective in female characters and female interest" (I ix), something which he set out to remedy in his second fiction. Elmaide St. Clair, the young woman, is the archetypal (indeed, verging on the parodic) sentimental heroine, who is possessed of a mind "strongly tinged with romance and the Romish religion" (I 74). An orphan (I 1), she possesses "a terrible portion of what is called, I believe, sensibility" (I 3). She has spent some years in a French convent (thus allowing Maturin to introduce attacks on the overly sentimental attributes of Catholicism) before moving, as her aunt writes, to "a retired part of the country with your uncle and me (a clergyman and his sister)" (I 2). Even her aunt acknowledges that her name identifies with a particular genre of writing:

> I ever dread the romantic name your mother gave you, which though I suppose common in France, no one in this country can hear without believing herself more than half the heroine of a tale. (I 14)

Her surname, of course, is a direct reference to Owenson's first novel *St Clair, or the Heiress of Desmond*, a novel written in imitation of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and at once combining warnings against extreme sensibility along with lavish descriptions of such sensibility in action.[8]

[8] Owenson's subtitle also suggests that in many ways the novel sees itself as following on from Charlotte Smith's *Desmond.*

The novel commences as Elmaide is preparing to enter "the gaieties of a city in its gay season" (I 2), thus seeming to indicate that what we are presented with will be the story of a young woman's entrance into the 'world'. The accumulation of obvious markers of sentimental fiction continues. The aunt delivers a diatribe against sensibility when applied to anything more than "the trivial parts of life" (I 3). She recalls a passage in her own life when she chose an unsuitable suitor over a more proper one merely because of her own earlier sensibility. In all, the aunt's letter recalls the tone, matter, and sentiment of conduct books and 'moral' fictions. It even includes a 'sermon' against modern philosophy and sensibility by Elmaide's uncle. It addresses a female reader, and purports to give advice to women on proper codes of behaviour. The dangers of sensibility are that it confuses the real world with a world of romance; "The history of its internal feelings furnishes it with the narrative of romance, nor will the narrative be long without a hero" (I 4). The hero of Elmaide's own particular romance will be revealed as a young Irishman, Ormsby Bethel.

The novel begins, therefore, with an attack on the sensibility and "the modern philosophy" (I 14). The dangers inherent in sensibility not only include misjudgement and impulsiveness, but also a dangerous elision of gender differences. When Elmaide imagines an ideal 'character', she confusingly ends up describing a strange androgynous being:

> I have conceived a character that I wish had never existed – a young, a very young person, almost a boy, with the form of a girl, and the feelings of a man; no, not of a man, with more modesty, more freshness, more retirement and timidity, and youthfulness of mind, than men, men in the world, *can* have. (I 21-22 Italics in original)

Sensibility, then, endangers the very notion of sexual difference upon which an ideal of domesticity can be founded. It not only leads to 'romantic' delusion but also to a blurring of gender identities. As such, *The Wild Irish Boy* will attempt to neutralise the dangers of sensibility, moving away from Elmaide's narrative to that of Ormsby Bethel, and his attempt to remove an excessive sensibility from both himself and his wife. Athanasia is, like Elmaide, associated with a particularly dangerous false sensibility. She is constantly presented as a reader of works which Maturin presents as dangerous:

> [Madame De Staël's] novel of Delphine was under her pillow, and her eyelids, even in sleep, were stained with the tears which a false sensibility had excited by its perusal. (III 105)

Whereas Mortimer and Glorvina were united by a sympathy based on the conjunction of primeval and modern sentiment, the marriage of Athanasia and Ormsby can only really develop once Athanasia renounces modern and 'false' sentimental literature:

> [A] few *days* back I was a miserable, perverted being, seduced by the jargon of sentiment, and sacrificing my best feelings and affections to a false pernicious principle which I dared not examine [...] When I recollect myself, and so lately, the pupil of false sentiment, and *all its works*; dying to be the heroine of a mad and wicked tale of a Rousseau, of a Gothe [*sic*], of a Wolstonecraft [*sic*]; dying to convert imaginary duties into real, and real into imaginary ones [...] I have *banished all my French books*. (III 300-301, 303 Italics in original)

Maturin does not discount the concept of sentimental literature out of hand. For Ormsby, a sign of Athanasia's moral improvement is her new found approval for Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* rather than the 'French' sentimental literature she had been reading:

> I never knew the powers of her mind till this night, they were various, they were exquisite. She told me with a smile, that was not one of her plaintive smiles, that she was determined to try if her harp retained the virtue of charming away the evil spirit; and seating herself at it, began adapting some passages from the 'lay of the last minstrel,' which she had been reading, to a wild extemporaneous melody which she excelled in inventing. From the praises of her music she led me to the praises of the subject. She pointed out the passages of that most beautiful poem she had heard me admire, with a kind of doubtful appeal that almost interested me. (III 295-296)

Reconciling Athanasia and Bethel does not mean erasing 'sentiment' entirely, so much as replacing a dangerous French 'feminine' sentimental literature with a male-authored, British one. In a terse statement at the very end of the novel we learn the fate of Elmaide; "Elmaide St Clair is dead – she died for love" (III 388).

While Owenson presented a tale in which the young hero had to learn how to see his surroundings as romance, the first letter in *The Wild Irish Boy* argues that the 'romantic' is the wrong method of approaching social life:

> The hero or heroine, the idol of romantic passion, is discovered in some unlucky moment of common sense or common life, to be the last thing their worshipper would wish the idol to be found – an human being; to have passions and infirmities, and wants utterly unprovided for by the statutes of romance. (I, 5)

Whereas *The Wild Irish Girl* was concerned with inculcating its young hero with the ability to romantically view Ireland, Maturin's novel seems to be warning of the dangers of an excessive sensibility, and the dangers of assuming 'romance' as a structuring principle for viewing the external world. The opening letter thus suggests that we will have a reversal of the trajectory of *The Wild Irish Girl*, from a romantic position to one of

disenchantment, finally ending in a common sense view of social and amatory realities.

It is a confused and confusing plot. By examining the manner in which the novel refers to previous literary works we can appreciate the critique that Maturin is offering of the national tale. While the novel is densely allusive, there are three main intertexts to note; *Belinda* (1801) by Maria Edgeworth, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) by Sydney Owenson, *A Winter in London* (1806) by Thomas Skinner Surr. In suggesting that Maturin encodes within his text a parody of Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* by gradually removing the structuring principle of 'romance' and, concomitantly, increasing the emphasis on femininity primarily as a site of cultural consumption rather than production, I want to build on Tom Dunne's contention that *The Wild Irish Boy* "contrasted the sordid realities of Irish life with its hero's first Romantic dream of it" (81). As already noted, though, *The Wild Irish Boy* appears superficially to have very little to say about Ireland. Commenting on the novel, Joep Leerssen notes that it is in fact more akin to "a novel of fashionable life" (*Remembrance*: 43). This is indicated in the text early on, when Ormsby's romantic patriotism is betrayed by his interest in fashionable life around him:

> On my first arrival in the country, I flattered myself that I was studying the national character and tracing the germs of patriotism and courage in the face of the peasant, till I found myself gazing on a public building, or an equipage whose whirl stunned me as it passed. There is, perhaps, no discovery so mortifying as this to a Paoli or Kosciusko (*sic*) of sixteen.
> (I 120-21)

Ormsby's attempt to place himself in a lineage of republican patriotism is supplanted here by his gradual absorption into fashionable life; "At length I

suffered myself to sink into the stream of things, sent out every sense in quest of objects of novelty" (I 121).

The wild Irish boy of the title, then, operates in a very different way to Owenson's heroine. While Glorvina acted as *genius loci* and was particularly rooted in a Connaught landscape, Ormsby Bethel is marked by his movement from place to place. His role as national character is always in doubt. Born in France, his childhood is spent being "hurried about from place to place" (I 78). His various residences in the novel will include the suburbs of London, Cumberland, Dublin, Offaly, Bray, and central London, before the novel ends with his intended journey back to Ireland. While we never learn the reason behind his initial uprooting from his birthplace of Ailly au Clochers, it would seem to be connected with the revolution, as it is "an ebullition of revolutionary philanthropy" (I 78) that destroys the church registers that record his birth-date in 1792. Ormsby, then, born sometime around the beginning of the revolution, is both without a location and parentage. The novel will detail his gradual discovery of his parents, and the resulting settlement that occurs.

Against Owenson's static west of Ireland, then, we are presented with a novel that has no central fixed point. In *The Wild Irish Girl* the trajectory of the novel is from the metropolitan centre to the pastoral idyll. Owenson enacts a retreat from a morally corrupting centre to a reinvigorating periphery. In *The Wild Irish Girl* Mortimer therefore holds up Connaught as "the classic ground of Ireland"(17), where he will "have a fair opportunity of beholding the Irish character in all its *primeval* ferocity"(17

Italics in original). For Mortimer, the essential Irish national character cannot be seen in the city, and so Dublin is given a cursory treatment:

> It is not, however, in Dublin I shall expect to find the tone of national character and manner; in the first circles of all great cities (as in courts), the native features of national character are softened into general uniformity, and the genuine feelings of nature are suppressed or exchanged for a political compliance with the reigning modes and customs, which hold their tenure from the sanction and example of the seat of government. (16)

Owenson mentions the "*swinish multitude* of fashion"(9 Italics in original) of London, upsetting the normal associative link with the lower classes in the original Burkean use of the term. It is this class, however, in which the homogenisation of cities occurs, linking implicitly the "first circles" of cities with the effacement of national character. Dublin society can distinguish itself by its own version of Irish hospitality but what might be considered as 'real' national character must be looked for outside of the urban centre. Otherwise, Dublin (fashionable) life matches London "goal for goal...in every elegant refinement of life and manners"(16).

In the mobility of its central character we can see in *The Wild Irish Boy* an engagement with Burke and, more particularly, Owenson's appropriation of Burke. The novel will eventually end with Bethel returning to his estates in Ireland, and so providing the foundation on which the improvement of the country can follow. Landed property, therefore, is seen ultimately as the only guarantor of stability. Burke's argument in favour of landed property over mobile property as a basis for the transmission of national character was adapted, with some modifications, by Owenson for her national tale. However, as Deirdre Lynch points out, placing an

emphasis on landed property as the basis of transmission of stability will necessarily be shadowed by fears over other forms of 'property':

> The model for the transmission of nationality and value that Burke takes from inherited property is shadowed by another model, that of trade. [...] And to think about the long-distance journeys of commodities is to think in a way that severs the connection between person and things, and that undermines the concept of 'perpetual ownership' that Burke invokes to settle national identity. (47)

While De Staël's Corinne is, as Lynch recognises, a thoroughly hybrid character who is wealthy without owning property, questions of who owns property, as shown in the introduction, are central to the national tale. The primacy of landed property as a form of stability is central to *The Wild Irish Boy* as well, but I would argue that it is a novel which is haunted by trade, by consumerism, and by the movement of mobile property. The novel ends with Ormsby preparing to settle down in Ireland, but its detailing of his movements throughout challenge the rootedness of *The Wild Irish Girl.*

This brings us back to the notion that *The Wild Irish Boy* is a 'fashionable novel'. The fashionable novel dealt with the manners and mores of the metropolitan centre. As Peter Garside notes, it was in its most popular form a voyeuristic genre;

> Pitched to the prurient curiosities of an urban middle-class audience, capable of finding vicarious pleasure in glowing accounts of the lifestyle and accoutrements of the *beau monde*, yet at the same time hostile towards the kind of amorality and injustice depicted. ('Consolidation and Dispersal': 43)

In *The Wild Irish Boy*, Maturin consciously refers to one of the most notorious of the fashionable novelists, Thomas Skinner Surr. Surr himself appears in *The Wild Irish Boy* "at some distance examining one of the morning papers" (III 163), where he is described as "the most distinguished

novelist of the day" (III 163). As noted already, Maturin constantly referred to the constraints on authorial independence imposed by the demands of the audience for novelists. Surr is included in this, his talents shown to be sacrificed for the demands of an audience who want anecdote and gossip. Surr's *A Winter in London* is regarded as "a melancholy mêlange of extracts from morning papers, information extracted from the menials of noble families, and hints from manuscript histories" (III 165). Examining *A Winter in London*, though, reveals the level to which Maturin's novel is indebted to it, and re-focuses attention on the Burkean problem of reconciling mobile and landed property.

A Winter in London is concerned with the revelation of its hero's true identity. At the beginning of the novel, Edward Montagu is an orphan who is rescued from a sinking Indiaman near Brighton in 1785. The fact that the ship he was on is owned by the East India Company is important, as it brings into focus the extent to which imperial trade is central to the novel, just as the destruction of church registers in *The Wild Irish Boy* centres the destructive effects of the revolutionary period. Montagu is raised in Cumberland under the patronage of a local landowner, the earl of Roseville. The character of the earl is important, as he is disparagingly referred to as a 'mushroom' by the steward of a neighbouring estate, a representative of new wealth without heritage. He is the son of a barkeeper, Edward Dickens, who through a very middle class frugality (bordering on avarice) manages to acquire enough capital to buy a share in a bankrupt bank. While Surr superficially satirises Dickens' avarice, there is in his story a very real sense

of the potential that capitalism allows for social mobility. As Adam Smith had noted, frugality and parsimony were central to capitalism:

> Capitals are increased by parsimony, and diminished by prodigality and misconduct.
> Parsimony, and not industry, is the immediate cause of the increase of capital. Industry, indeed, provides the subject which parsimony accumulates. But whatever industry might acquire, if parsimony did not save and store it up, the capital would never be the greater. (199)

Dickens' frugality in the short term allows for a long term investment. In this case, the capitalist is able to in effect buy his son into a position of nobility through the investment in the bank. The bank's financial difficulties are owing to the failure of an investment in a West Indies plantation. The colonies, it is suggested, are at best an ambivalent source of finance. As the main security for the loan covering this investment was an estate in Cumberland belonging to the Darlington family, Dickens is able to manoeuvre the owner of the estate into agreeing to a marriage between Dickens' son and the landowner's daughter, Amelia Darlington. Sawyer Dickens, the son of Edward, is portrayed in a more flattering light than his father was:

> Education had given him advantages to which his father ever remained a stranger: and his introduction, at an early period of life, to the polite and intelligent circle of Mr. Darlington's acquaintance, afforded him a view of the world never seen by his father. [...] Insensibly he became the well-informed man, the polished gentleman; and, by degrees, the combined influence of his manners and his purse introduced Mr. Sawyer Dickens into the very highest circles of fortune, rank, and fashion. (I 46-47)

A Winter in London will be concerned with what exactly makes a 'polished gentleman", and the plot will involve granting Dickens' new estate with the legitimacy of history, much as Glorvina's marriage to Mortimer grants

legitimacy on his claims to his Irish property. However, the novel contends that that legitimacy is already a form of commodity, something which is purchased rather than earned. As Edward Dickens says to Mr Darlington, in a money economy there is little to differentiate the capitalist and the aristocrat:

> Though I am what I am, through hard working and close saving, [...] and though your family, as I have heard, be come of lords and earls, [...] yet, Mr. Darlington, my two hundred thousand's as good as any duke's. (I 39)

Adopting the name of Roseville, Sawyer Dickens commences work on a new villa in Cumberland. His estate is contrasted by Surr with the adjoining Beauchamp estate, which represents a more 'natural', historically validated location:

> On each side of the eminence [Montagu] saw a park and mansion: but in nothing were they similar to each other. On his right the ivy-mantled towers of Beauchamp Abbey bounded the view of a thickly wooded domain, where huge oaks, the growth of centuries, waved over long dark terraces of grass, which the mower's scythe had never visited for years; grottoes of shell-work, surmounted with ill-formed images of stone, now green with moss; hermitages with straw-thatched roofs; fountains which leaden Cupids guarded; and caves dug deep in gloom, formed all together a display of the taste of other times, and made up a scene, which, while it impressed the thought "that grandeur once dwelt here," at the same time told to the beholder the tale of its desertion [...] When the eye turned to the left, a scene so different presented itself [...] the mansion of lord Roseville, combining, in a most masterly style of composition, all the magnificence of an Eastern palace with all the elegance of an Italian villa. (I 106-108)

The Beauchamps are a family who can chart their ancestry back to William the Conqueror, in marked contrast to Roseville's lack of a noble, landed ancestry. Their position in the modern world is precarious. As Smith had

noted, a modern commercial state did not have a plethora of such ancient families:

> I cannot help remarking it, that very old families, such as have possessed some considerable estate from father to son for many successive generations, are very rare in commercial countries. In countries which have little commerce, on the contrary, such as Wales or the highlands of Scotland, they are very common. (267)

The Beauchamp's, then, quite naturally belong in Cumberland, somewhere away from the metropolitan commercial centre.[9] The new estate is commensurate with modernity - the new earl completing a Grand Tour so that he can "publish his late Travels, under the title of An Agricultural Survey of France, Spain and Italy, in a hundred folios"(I 144). In contrast to the hive of activity that the Roseville estate is, Beauchamp Abbey becomes the historico-cultural repository of well-kept tapestries and art works. When Montagu visits the Abbey he is left "with a store of romantic ideas and sentiments" (I 125). Just as Connaught is presented as the location of romance in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Beauchamp Abby becomes the location of romance in *A Winter in London*. The Beauchamp family is associated with chivalric exploits and past grandeur while Roseville is full of the "pleasure … of modern refinement" (I 122). Montagu will eventually be revealed to be the heir to the Beauchamp Abbey, and his marriage to the daughter of the earl of Roseville will lead to a union of "domestic bliss" (III 263). The novel follows the move from petit bourgeois to aristocrat of Roseville/Dickens, and ends with the re-inscription of bourgeois values of domesticity into the aristocracy.

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[9] In *The Wild Irish Boy*, Cumberland is the site of Ormsby's "romantic intoxication" (I 101).

A Winter in London is interesting due to the extent to which the revelation of inheritance does not so much offer reconciliation between new wealth and old as merely confirm the interdependence of the two all along. In a fascinating scene set in London's Bond Street, Montagu is literally transformed into a gentleman by a succession of traders:

> In the space of a few hours, Neville had taken Edward to a score of tradesmen. When he stopped at a tailor's in Bond Street, expecting to be measured for a suit of clothes, what was his surprise to learn that Mr. Larolle made only coats; and that they had a dozen doors to drive before they reached 'the first hand in the world at waistcoats, braces, and inexpressibles!' The same 'artist' who excelled in fitting a dress shoe, would have been intolerable as a manufacturer of a pair of boots; and though Mr. Flint, the hatter, assured them, that for walking-hats, and hunting-hats, there was not a superior shop in London; yet he would confess, that for an opera-hat, Mr. Breach did certainly 'cut all the trade'. (II 82-83)

What we have here is the application of a principle of division of labour to the 'production' of the polished gentleman. Montagu's surprise in the second sentence is a result of his expecting his entire suit to be made by one craftsman, when in fact he has failed to take account of the degree of specialisation involved in producing a gentleman's costume. Just as Adam Smith placed an atomised workplace at the centre of his political economy, here the product of the division of labour is the fashionable member of society. Fashionable life, therefore, involves a dynamic of production and exchange that exactly replicates discourses of economy. If Edward Dickens is marked as a capitalist interested solely in investment, his son is associated with expenditure – the villa at Roseville being a particular example of what the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen termed 'conspicuous consumption':

> The basis on which good repute in any highly organised industrial community ultimately rests is pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a conspicuous consumption of goods. (84)

What *A Winter in London* seems to suggest, then, is that social rank is a form of vendible commodity. It inscribes political economy and consumerism into the very ideological structure of the novel. As one character comments, money is at the centre of the society depicted:

> Ah Cecilia! What a loss of happiness have you and I sustained, by not understanding that in this little island of shopkeepers money is the one thing needful. (II 142-143)

Let us look at an episode in *The Wild Irish Girl* that illuminates the awkward place that consumerism has within the national tale. At the suggestion of the Prince and Father John, Mortimer is induced to travel into Ulster. It is at this point that the discontinuity between bardic culture and modernity is re-inscribed. Ulster is called "the palladium of Irish industry and trade" (198). The economy of Ulster works according to a very Humean idea of progress:

> Industry, and this taste for comparative luxury, mutually re-act; and the former, while it bestows the *means*, enables them to gratify the suggestions of the latter; while their wants, nurtured by enjoyment, afford fresh allurement to continued exertion. (198)

A novel interested in developing the sentiments of the heart, however, finds little to praise in this social situation. If the bards were "the 'Sons of Song'" (199), the Ulstermen are negatively portrayed as "these sons of trade" (199). Mortimer meets the last bard, and after having received a performance from him, the separation of the cultural practice from the world of commercial transactions seems complete:

> So great was my veneration for this 'bard of other times,' that I felt as though it would have been an indelicacy to have offered him any pecuniary reward for the exertions of his tuneful talent; I therefore made my little offering to his wife. (202)

The episode with the bard however, comes with a long footnote recounting an actual encounter between a Rev. Sampson and 'the Bard of the Magilligans' in the form of a letter forwarded to Owenson. After the long letter, Owenson recounts her own encounter with the bard:

> In February 1806 the author, being then but eighteen miles distant from the residence of the Bard, received a message from him, intimating that as he heard she wished to purchase his harp, he would dispose of it on very moderate terms. He was then in good health and spirits, though in his hundredth and ninth year. (202)

Ironically, Owenson herself places the bard in a system of transactions, in which the powerful signifier of prior cultural performance, the harp, can be sold to the tourist/author.

It seems then, that *The Wild Irish Girl* wants to suggest that Ireland is both savage and polite – that it belongs temporally to both the first and third stages that Macpherson writes about. Mortimer's encounter with the bard stresses the place of the bard outside of financial transactions – his performance is something that cannot be paid for and is therefore authentic, existing in and for itself. Owenson's encounter belongs to a commercial modernity in that it does not even involve a face-to-face encounter – the relationship is entirely that between the consumer and the product. There is an effort in the text, though, to separate the sons of trade from the sons of song. Glorvina's preference for Macpherson's Ossian over the originals suggest that rather than being some primitive essence of Irishness, she actually belongs to a modernity in which readers of Ossian "have leisure to

cultivate the mind, and to restore it, with reflection, to a primeval dignity of sentiment" (Macpherson, op cit.). As Luke Gibbons points out "it is the outsider in Lady Morgan's novel, not the native, who is caught up in the pursuit of essences and the cult of the natural" (Gibbons 'Romanticism': 206). The point of view of the outsider, though, is the dominant one in the novel.

What we have in the episode with the harp and the 'last of the bards', is a disjunction between the 'romantic' text that wants to keep some distance between the commercial and the cultural, and an authorial commentary that ironically conflates both discourses. In *A Winter in London* such discourses, despite the overly schematic presentation of the contrasting estates, are inextricably bound. We are dealing with the ultimate middle class novel, lavishly describing exotic masquerades while moralistically denouncing them, and all the while holding out the possibility that a little economy can allow the reader to progress up the social ladder as well.

The episode with the last of the bards in *The Wild Irish Girl* presents a moment of cultural production that does not produce a vendible commodity – to again refer to Smith, it can be classed as unproductive labour:

> The labour of some of some of the most respectable orders in society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value, and does not fix or realise itself in any permanent subject, or vendible commodity, which endures after that labour is past, and for which an equal quantity of labour could afterwards by procured. (192)

In this class of labour, for Smith, lie "some of the gravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous" (192) professions. In an

evocative phrase, Smith describes how unproductive labour exists only in performance;

> Like the declamation of the actor, the harangue of the orator, or the tune of the musician, the work of all of them perishes in the very instant of production. (192)

Glorvina, 'sweet voice', is example of unproductive labour in Smithian political economy, as is the last of the bards. This is not necessarily a bad thing – Smith realises the importance of unproductive labour to the polity. However, what I want to suggest is that Owenson removes her characters from the world of vendible commodities in the 'romantic' story of *The Wild Irish Girl*. The quality of the bard's performance is linked to the fact that Mortimer feels he cannot pay directly for it, and instead has to charitably give money to the bard's wife. *The Wild Irish Boy*, however, presents a fashionable world in which *The Wild Irish Girl*'s cultural production cannot be separated so easily from the production of costumes and other 'commercial' consumables. Glorvina's important symbolic role in the former novel is referred to only as a model for a costume worn at a masquerade. The separation between national culture and industry, between the sons of song and the sons of trade, that was involved in the romance of the former, is questioned by Maturin's referencing of Surr.

A Winter in London in effect replicates an ideal Smithian economic idea of improvement, in which the parsimony of the father can lead to the economic improvement of the son (again, note how the new earl of Roseville is associated with expenditure and estate improvement). It modifies Smith, however, in presenting social mobility as an effect of capitalism, unlike Smith who, as Liz Bellamy points out, suggested that a progressive economy

would not necessarily lead to a challenge to the social hierarchy (33-34). In effect, *A Winter in London* argues for an association between national culture and commerce that proposes capitalism as the normative model of progress. The earl of Roseville's daughter will marry the heir of Beauchamp, but that heir had already been under the patronage of Roseville from the start of the novel. Historical and cultural legitimacy is, in effect, purchased. The mercenary marriage between Amelia Darlington and Sawyer Dickens that 'created' Roseville is replicated with the final marriage in the novel. What this does, though, is figure 'heritage' as a form of vendible commodity, purchased through the act of marriage.

A Winter in London ultimately celebrates a new consumerism that allows a greater mobility of property as well as allowing a metropolitan audience to normalise 'culture' through the act of consumption. At one point, the narrator interrupts a description of a fashionable masquerade to comment on the economic improvement of English society:

> No longer let the descriptions of entertainments recorded in the Arabian Nights be regarded as fabulous, when the nobility, and even the merchants of London, can charm away the hours of winter with such fêtes as these. (II: 215)

The exotic has been domesticated through the ability of a metropolitan audience to recreate a similar level of luxury.

In *A Winter in London* empire is conceived of in purely commercial terms. From the opening of the novel through to its conclusion, when colonies are mentioned it is in relation to their roles in a fiscal network of transactions. There are two types of transactions, however. The West Indies and the reference to the Indiaman that Montagu is rescued from suggest that imperial trade is a matter of material commodities – the buying and selling

of vendible commodities that have a material reality. And so when the West Indies are mentioned it is in the context of the failure or success of a particular harvest there. The novel, however, fails to recognise the effects of colonial power on the colonies themselves. Both the Indiaman and the West Indies are problematic locations of empire. The sinking of the Indiaman that begins the novel occurs, we are told, in 1785, perhaps symbolically prophesying the impeachment of Warren Hastings that would occur two years later and reveal widespread malpractice and profiteering in the East India Company (for the historical background see Carnall & Nicholson eds.). Yet this is not indicated in the text. The West Indies, as a principle site of slave labour, figured heavily in abolitionist literature of the 1780s and 1790s. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Clendinning, the steward of Mortimer's estate, is described as being "the abode of the transmigrated soul of some *West Indian* planter" (34) as a method of presenting him as tyrannous and oppressive. In *A Winter in London*, however, the West Indies are mentioned merely as a source of harvests, despite the massive political campaigning that led to the abolition of slave trade from Africa in 1807. There is no reference to slave labour, let alone the various slave rebellions that racked the West Indies throughout the latter decades of the eighteenth-century. The centrality of the West Indies to the imperial economy is not really investigated, despite the fact that during the timescale of the novel (1785-c.1805) the area "achieved their greatest economic importance within the British Empire" (Ward: 415). As Timothy Morton has argued, abolitionist (and anti-Hastings) literature pointed out the link between the trade in material commodities such as sugar and the inhumane practices associated

with the slave trade in the West Indies (171-206). *A Winter in London*, however, bypasses the negative effects of imperial trade in commodities. It even goes some way to explaining how there is a trade in more than just material commodities. The novel suggests the possibility that exotic cultures have a novelty value that is eagerly consumed by the fashionable metropolitan audience, before they too become passé. In *A Winter in London* there is no real suggestion that the West Indies can provide *cultural* commodities. The references to the harvests that fail suggest that the only 'culture' in the West Indies is agriculture. Where the exotic is mentioned it is terms of an orientalism in design (the Arabian nights, for instance, or Roseville's 'Eastern' palace). To borrow from Bourdieu, the West Indies provide (or, as the case may be, destroy) economic capital.

When imperial trade is reconsidered in terms of the cultural commodities transacted, the relation of the Celtic peripheries to London comes under a new light. Consider the reception of Scottish and Irish music:

> Without entering into the controversy whether reels and jigs ought or ought not to have been sanctioned, it is sufficient to observe, that the fashionable world became almost universally intoxicated with the novelty; and every ball during the winter was opened with the duchess of Drinkwater's Fancy. (I 207-08)

What causes novelty in the fashionable world, in other words, is the reception of supposedly antique popular tunes. Divorced from their social and 'natural' location, the reels and jigs are no longer powerful markers of a traditional culture but bound up in a the fashionable world. That which allows the antique to be considered 'novel' is its status as a fashionable accessory. Suitably enough, Montagu, the character who will be revealed to

be heir to an 'authentic' noble genealogy, arrives at a masquerade in the costume of a minstrel from "days of yore" (II 223).

In *The Wild Irish Boy* Maturin makes a clear link between fashion, colonial subjugation and military power. In Surr's novel *Splendid Misery* (1803), a ball is held in a gallery "converted into a most superb temple, after the design of the magnificent scene of the Temple of the Sun, painted for the play of Pizarro, at Drury Lane Theatre" (I 120). As we saw earlier, Surr's text equivocates between criticising and celebrating luxurious consumption. The masquerades may be morally damnable, but they are the reason people read his books. There is a voyeuristic element to his descriptions of the decorations that are on view in the masquerade. Maturin has his climactic masquerade occur amidst similar settings, but they provoke a much more problematic response:

> I [Ormsby] found [Lady Montrevor] surrounded by a group of fashionables, to whom she was explaining the intended effect of a deception in the perspective of the adjacent room, which was intended to represent the Temple of the Sun, the splendid theatre of Peruvian worship. Colonel Montolieu was laughing, with all the open vivacity of his character, at the fashionable rage for borrowing all the embellishments of our drapery, and apartments, and fetes, from the recent local scenery of some national victory. "It is very well, hitherto," said he laughing – "Egypt and South America certainly furnish enough of picturesque objects, but what the devil will you do, if our next successful expedition should be to the Cape of Good Hope, for instance? Will you fill your rooms with sketches of squab Dutch villas, and Hottentots in natural bronze, capering among them – *Mais coutume est tout.*" (III 308-09)

In many ways, this is an essential speech in understanding the novel. It radically alters the way the reader will receive the subsequent arrival of Lady Montrevor as Glorvina later. Maturin cannot describe the fashionable world's reception of the exotic without referring to the military conquests

involved in that reception. The negative impact of colonialism on the 'native' culture, an impact that was occluded in Surr, becomes prominent. If the costumes of the fashionable world are taken from sites of recent 'national' victories, however, what does that imply about the fashion for reproductions of Irish culture?

3. Eliding imperialism in fashionable consumerism

When Ormsby first approaches his father's estate he passes through Banagher:

> On the evening of the second day, we passed through Banagher, a town at the extremity of Leinster, at whose foot flows the Shannon, dividing that province from Connaught.
>
> We crossed a bridge of some antiquity, and were in the west of Ireland. (I 141)

The Shannon separates a modern Leinster from Connaught, that zone of 'primeval' Irish culture in which *The Wild Irish Girl* was primarily set. As such, crossing a bridge (particularly one 'of some antiquity') is a powerful signifier of movement from a modern geographical location to a primitive one. When Lord Montrevor arrives in Ireland, however, he transforms this signifier into an integral part of a neo-classically influenced interior design:

> "This room, for instance, which commands a view of the Shannon, must be completely aquatic in its costume: draperies of pale green silk must be suspended from branches of coral and sea-weed, and wild water-flowers; a broad cornice shall be diversified with bulls' heads [...] and urns, and Naiads; mirrors placed opposite the windows shall multiply the reflections of the water; the pedestal shall represent the fluctuation of waves on a silver ground, to intimate the sparkling sands of your native river [...] I have a capital chimney-piece, representing the combat of Hercules and Achelous, in my dressing-room, which I shall remove here: every thing shall be quite in Hope's style." (II 194-95)

The geographical specificity of the river becomes lost in the consumerist copying of accepted styles of interior design. The river in effect becomes not a symbolic divide between a modern version of Ireland and an Owensonian antiquity, but a commodity, part of a fashionable redecoration. Fittingly, Lord Montrevor finishes his plans for the room by mentioning his plan to place a chimney-piece representing Hercules defeating the river-god Achelous. Lord Montrevor here becomes a parodic reflection of the improving English landlord, bringing from England improvements not in agricultural methods but in fixtures and fittings. The Herculean taming of the river Shannon by Lord Montrevor denudes the river of its symbolical resonance by transforming it into a passive object of decoration in a scheme already heavily influenced by stylised representations of the 'exotic'.

Thomas Hope's influential *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* was published in 1807, consolidating the fashion for Egyptian and neo-classical interior design among the fashionable world. Also writing in 1807, Robert Southey, who appears alongside Surr in a scene in *The Wild Irish Boy*, noted how "Every thing now must be Egyptian: the ladies wear crocodile ornaments, and you sit upon a sphinx in a room hung round with mummies" (Southey: 449). The fashion for Egyptian furnishings followed on from the Napoleon's campaigns in 1798, and the publication in 1803 of Vivant Denon's *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*. Denon's account had included elaborate plates illustrating Egyptian antiquities, as well as long descriptions of native customs and manners. The English translation, however, seemed to be more interested in presenting the text as evidence of French colonial malpractice than as a work of antiquarian interest. The

translator, Arthur Aikin, wrote a preface that highlighted this aspect of the book:

> We see what a dreadful licence of lust, rapine, and slaughter, the French troops were allowed to indulge in, and how whole villages were exterminated upon the bare suspicion of meditating resistance to the ravishers of their women, the desolators of their fields, the incendiaries of their houses. (I vi)

In addition to this, the exotic scenes that are depicted are constantly in danger of being broached by outbursts of imperial violence; "the journal of the desultory operations of a campaign against an enemy ... interrupts unseasonably now and then an account of the venerable monuments of Thebes or Tentyra" (I v). In Hope's work on interior design, though, any reference of the French campaign is expunged, and the book concentrates on proper arrangement of reproductions of Egyptian antiquities. *The Wild Irish Boy* takes place against the background of the British military victories in Egypt over French forces in 1801. Lord Montrevor's son, Colonel Montolieu, is a veteran of the recent victories in the Nile valley, and it is he who brings back Egyptian antiquities:

> Hammond, Mr. Corbett, and I [Bethel], were collected round to examine some Egyptian antiquities with which [the room] was decorated. Many of them were originals, and had been collected in Egypt by Col. Montolieu... (II 235)

By saying that 'many' are 'originals', Maturin leaves open the possibility that some are not. They are, in other words, modern reproductions of Egyptian antiquities. They are also placed more closely in connection with the military expedition of Col. Montolieu.

The most striking instance of Maturin making a connection between fashionable consumption and colonial oppression comes in the final

masquerade scene, in which the walls of a London gallery are decorated with scenes from Peruvian history. The climactic set-piece at the end of *The Wild Irish Boy* takes place at a masquerade which has been furnished with the "most exquisite imitations of the vegetable productions of South America"(III 346). Barring for the moment the repeated references to "imitations", the scene moves to a room that has been furnished:

> [W]ith paintings representing the most striking passages of Peruvian history; the first interview of the unfortunate Ataliba with the Spanish troops; the magnificence of his train and procession; the car enamelled with pearl and diamond, and glowing with the luxuriant plumage of his country, from which he was dragged by the hands of the Spanish soldiers. (III 349)

What is important to remember in considering Maturin's deployment of Ataliba is the reference made to Owenson in *The Wild Irish Girl* to Peruvian history. In a long footnote refuting the supposed inherent cruelty of the Irish, proposed by Mortimer, Ataliba and Montezuma are explicitly linked to the events of 1798 in particular, as examples of counter-imperialists who have been misrepresented by an imperialist historiography:

> Had the *historiographer* of MONTEZUMA or ATALIBA defended the *resistance* of his countrymen, or recorded the woes from whence it sprung, though his QUIPAS was bathed in their blood, or embued with their tears, he would have unavailingly recorded them; for the victorious *Spaniard* was insensible to the woes he had created, and called the resistance it gave birth to cruelty. (176 n.1 Emphasis in original.)

It is a defence of Irish 'cruelty' during 1798, and Owenson couches the defence in language that evokes the feminine sensibility that Maturin feels he needs to excise from his own novel:

> But when *nature* is wounded through all her dearest ties, she must *turn* on the hand that stabs, and endeavour to wrest the

> poniard from the *grasp* that aims at the life-pulse of *her* heart. (176 n. 1)

Owenson presents the experience of rebellion in Ireland as being analogous to the colonial experience in South America. Maturin, on the other hand, points out the extent to which the metropolitan fashionable audience can consume stylised representations of this colonial experience. However, by having Lady Montrevor appear in the costume of Glorvina, he places reproductions of Irish culture within this experience. There is a similar equivalence between Irish and colonial experience, but here it is not through a language of sentiment and grievance, but through a shared location within the horizon of consumable reproductions open to a fashionable crowd. Ireland is described by a fashionable character as analogous to other peripheral sites; "The heir himself was sent to Scotland, to Ireland, to the Indies, East and West, to every country from whose bourn (*sic*) no traveller returns" (III 75). Maturin would have been writing with the temporary craze for 'Glorvina brooches' that followed the publication of Owenson's novel in mind (see Connolly 'Wild Irish Girl'). The novelty of reproductions of Irish artefacts places them as equivalent to other fashionable appropriations of exotic cultures. They are not seen as indicators of primeval nobility but as accessories to a consumerist mentality.

4. Connecting colonies: Maturin's use of Edgeworth's *Belinda*

Maturin furthers the identification of Ireland with the practices of colonialism by having Ormsby referred to in terms that closely link him with the character of Mr. Vincent, a Creole landowner in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*. There is no doubt that *Belinda* is an important intertext for *The*

Wild Irish Boy. It is highly praised for combining "a faithful representation of life, with just modes of reasoning, and a forcible inculcation of good principles" (III 166).

Belinda is inherently concerned with questions of commodification, both of individuals and fashionable life in total. For Andrew McCann, the main story of the novel "is that in which Belinda and Clarence assert their own true natures independently of the other economies of value to which they are subjected" (185). Belinda is pointedly described at the beginning of the novel as little more than a vendible commodity bandied about like a common item:

> "As for this Belinda Portman 'twas a good hit to send her to Lady Delacour's; but I take it, she hangs upon hands; for last winter, when I was at Bath, she was hawked about every where, and the aunt was puffing her with might and main. You heard of nothing, wherever you went, but of Belinda Portman, and Belinda Portman's accomplishments. Belinda Portman and her accomplishments, I'll swear, were as well advertised as Packwood's razor strops." (25)

The use of the language of advertising in *Belinda* has been well noted (in addition to McCann see Greenfield: 222). Interestingly though, in Edgeworth's own 'Advertisement' that prefaces the book, she differentiates her book from a novel:

> Every author has a right to give what appellation he may think proper to his works. The public have also a right to accept or refuse the classification that is presented.
> The following work is offered to the public as a Moral Tale – the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel. (3)

There is an attempt to differentiate her work from a particularly commodifed form of literature, and claim some value for it above and beyond its status as a novel. It is as a 'novel' that *Belinda* is referred to throughout *The Wild Irish Boy*.

Pearson notes the influence of Edgeworth's novel on Maturin, although I would like to qualify her linking of the characters of Ormsby Bethel and Edgeworth's Clarence Hervey (646-47). The two men are suitors to the eponymous heroine of Edgeworth's novel. After some prevarication Belinda chooses Hervey, having seriously entertained thoughts of Mr. Vincent. In Edgeworth's novel Mr Vincent is appraised by Lady Delacour, the lady of fashion who is an influence on Maturin's Lady Montrevor (Pearson: 647). Having been introduced to Mr Vincent, she comments to herself "Il a infiniment l'air d'un héros de roman" (332). When Ormsby meets Athanasia Montoleiu for the first time the latter's governess makes the same comment:

> I suppose I gazed intently on Miss Montolieu; perhaps, too, the glow of admiration had lit up my face, for Madame la Governante pointing to a passage in her book, (Belinda) for she too was reading, said audibly, "Il y'a infiniment l'air d'un heros de Roman." (I 235-236)

While this highly meta-fictional reference further demonstrates the intertextuality of *The Wild Irish Boy*, it also subverts Edgeworth's novel. In Maturin's novel, Mr. Vincent gets to marry the English girl. As Pearson has pointed out, Bethel also resembles Mr. Vincent in that he is manipulated into gambling (647) and, though Pearson doesn't say this, he becomes an absentee landlord when in London, awaiting the "next remittances from Ireland" (III 344-345). Bethel, so, is not a native but a colonist, occupying that zone between insider and outsider that would become such an integral part (and cliché) of the Anglo-Irish mindset. His situation is similar to that described by Albert Memmi:

> The colonialist is unsure of his true nationality. He navigates between a faraway society which he wants to make his own

> (but which becomes to a certain degree mythical), and a present society which he rejects and thus keeps in the abstract. (Quoted in Kirkpatrick 'Gentlemen': 334)

His reception in London questions the extent to which any Irish claims for solutions to national grievances are destined to fall on deaf ears (and thus negates the underlying optimism of *The Wild Irish Girl*):

> I was proceeding to speak to these and other points [i.e. Ireland and the Union], when I was checked by the total silence with which my observations were received, and by the reflexion [*sic*] that *there* they could expect no better reception – I bowed and was silent. (III 140 Emphasis in the original.)

If Bethel, and by extension Ireland, are seen in terms of a colony, we can see a bringing to the foreground by Maturin of certain themes which occurred in Surr.

As noted, Surr's *A Winter in London*, the prime example for Maturin of the novel as purely a commercial product, dealt surreptitiously with colonialism, the West Indies being seen as both facilitating the rise of Roseville, albeit by allowing him to purchase the estate of Lord Darlington. Darlington's son and heir is lost on a tour of inspection in the West Indies (I 37 *passim*), and a consequent bankruptcy due to the failure of the sugar crop allows Sawyer Dickens to buy Darlington's Cumberland estate and, consequently, the title of earl of Roseville for his son. The novel's hero, however, is a returnee from the colonial fringe, rescued from a sinking 'Indiaman' when a baby, and brought up in Cumberland. The colonies have a dual function in the novel, impacting on the regenerative capabilities of the English aristocracy. They allow 'new wealth' to attain a title and then provide the hero who will give that new wealth an historical and moral valediction. The colonies in *A Winter in London*, therefore, are both

disabling and enabling. It also provides an exotic imprint that can be translated into fashionable commodities, foreign gewgaws that Surr delights in describing for his masquerade set pieces. As has already been discussed, the uncomfortable and threatening is domesticated and pacified, firstly by the military and then by the shopkeepers. The final marriage between Roseville and Beauchamp is ironically referred to in *The Wild Irish Boy* when Maturin names his immoral English absentee landlord Roschamp, amalgamating Surr's two families. What had promised a unity of social classes in England promises a damaging colonial exploitation in *The Wild Irish Boy*.

5. Conclusion

Maturin, then, parodies Owenson by returning her attempt to provide an allegorical solution to Ireland's problems to an imperial horizon based on networks of trade and exploitation. The national tale and fashionable novel are placed together within this framework, a framework that for Maturin is incommensurable with any degree of authorial integrity or authenticity. Owenson's novel, for Maturin, exists only as a source of costumes for the modern lady of fashion. The female producer of cultural recognition, pregnant with symbolic capital, is supplanted by the female consumer. The 'natural and national' sentiments that Mortimer finds in Glorvina are nowhere to be found. An imperial horizon of wounded sensibility in *The Wild Irish Girl* is replaced by an imperial horizon of capitalist exploitation in Maturin's novel.

As Maturin continued writing novels his presentation of female sensibility and its role in cultural production would become more ambivalent. *The Wild Irish Boy* was substantially re-written in *Women*, in a manner that took a more sympathetic approach to female sensibility while, if anything, furthering his belief that cultural production of the type displayed in the fiction of Owenson and De Staël was marginalised by modern forms of commerce. In *The Wild Irish Boy* Ormsby comments that the "species of romantic intoxication" (I 101) that he experienced in Cumberland was completed by the reading of Ossian. Maturin's next novel would raise questions about the complicity of a romantic viewpoint with revanchist Irish nationalism. In raising this complicity, Maturin would in effect end up writing one of his most pessimistic and dark tales, *The Milesian Chief.*

'Passing before modern eyes': romance and rebellion in *The Milesian Chief*

In this chapter I would like to look at how *The Milesian Chief* deals with the difficulties attached to the project of adopting the structuring principle of romance when depicting Ireland in fiction. The circumspect manner in which *The Wild Irish Girl* dealt with the 1798 rebellion is replaced in *The Milesian Chief* with an emphasis on how a Burkean approach to Ireland, using romance as a necessary fiction to promote social stability, might actually have the opposite effect. Romance and rebellion are linked, yet it is never clear which is the determinative form of agency in the novel. As Maturin describes his work as a 'Romance', it is useful to briefly consider the generic context for fiction about Ireland.

1. Ireland and the novel

I would like to begin with two differing assessments of the potential for Irish fiction written within less than ten years apart from each other. The first, by Thomas Moore, appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in February 1826:

> At present Ireland bids fair to be the great mart of fiction; and as, from what we have just said, it may be concluded that the character of her people will bear working, somewhat better than her gold mines, we may expect a sufficiently abundant product from that quarter. (Moore: 359)

The second is Maria Edgeworth's famous farewell to fiction from a letter to Michael Pakenham Edgeworth eight years later in 1834:

> It is impossible to draw Ireland as she is now in a book of fiction – realities are too strong, party passions too violent to bear to see, or care to look at their faces in a looking-glass. The people would only break the glass, and curse the fool who held the mirror up to nature – distorted nature, in a fever. (Deane et al, *Field Day*: vol. I, 1051)

The second is the better known, a single paragraph from a private letter that has subsequently structured much critical thinking on the nineteenth-century Irish novel. The letter can be seen as the swan song of a particular brand of Protestant nationalist fiction that had at its base a strong ameliorative agenda, and the beginnings of a more hybrid historical moment in which Catholic novelists were to become more vocal.[10] This seems to be the implication behind Moore's analysis of Irish fiction in the 1820s:

> Among the many countries fit to be the 'local habitation' of Romance, it is strange that Ireland – particularly after the successful examples of Miss Edgeworth and Lady Morgan – should till lately, have been so very little brought into operation. [...] The advantage of being a *terra incognita*, at least to English statesmen, Ireland has, till lately, possessed almost as fully as the interior of Africa. (Moore: 358)

Moore goes on to suggest that while the history of Ireland has rendered it unable to furnish "any safe or worthy theme for the poet" it has created a situation that "is eminently more favourable to the more humble inspirations of the novelist" (358). The national poem is an impossibility, or at least one so fraught with political danger that it is a problematic concept in an Irish context:

> Nationality, in the Anglo-Irish Dictionary, means Treason, - and, unluckily, has had no other meaning for the last six hundred years. The spirit of resistance to England, which in Scotland was loyalty and patriotism, has, in Ireland, always been rebellion. What then is left for the Irish poet? - the Conquerors of his country he will not celebrate, and her Rebels he dare not, if he would. (358)

As opposed to poetry, Irish history, for Moore, shows great potential as being a source of material for 'Romances'. There are a number of suggestive phrases and implications in Moore's review that were

fundamentally important in Maturin's approach to the problem of writing Ireland into fiction. Involved in Moore's review is the supposition, firstly, that Ireland is unknown to an English audience, followed by a wish that such ignorance will be remedied by a greater production of fiction. Fiction, given here the generic name of 'Romance', is likened to material production, being of lesser nobility than poetry and similar to mining – Ireland bids to be the "great mart of fiction", and the use of words and phrases from commercial commodity trading links fiction specifically to an economic function. Finally, Ireland is likened to Africa in the level to which English statesmen are ignorant of its realities. Ireland is thus inextricably linked with foreignness, alterity, and a colonial condition, and Moore's review of Irish fiction leads him to argue for Catholic emancipation, "the removal of that bar of disqualification, under which the great mass of her people lies" (372). Until that happens "there can never be peace for Ireland, or safety for the Empire" (372). Noting how such sentiments can be read in the novels he is reviewing,[11] Moore comments with some irony that "it is pleasant, after ages of bad romance in politics, to find thus, at last, good politics in romance" (372).

There are several elements we have to untangle here if we are to read back onto Maturin some of the concerns in Moore and Edgeworth's views of contemporary Irish fiction. While both deal with fiction produced in Ireland, there is a difference in how the two writers view fiction. For Edgeworth, fiction is impossible, yet her conception of fiction relies on its realistic

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[10] For an example of this view see Sloan: 50-51.

[11] *Today in Ireland*, Eyre Evans Crowe, *Tales of the O'Hara Family*, John Banim, *O'Hara, or 1798*, W. H. Maxwell, and *The Adventurers; or scenes in Ireland in the Reign of Elizabeth*, Anon.

abilities. For Moore, however, the recalcitrance of Ireland to realistic description is what leads him to see Ireland as a potential site for fiction. Moore carefully describes the type of fiction amenable to Ireland as 'Romance'. We seem to have a separation of fiction into two categories – realism (associated with the term 'novel') and romance. It is necessary to examine this binary and see in order to understand Maturin's *The Milesian Chief*, in which genre categories are foregrounded as sites of indeterminacy. *The Milesian Chief* will be concerned in no small part to the extent to which Irish politics, especially separatist nationalism, were interconnected with a 'romantic' viewpoint.

In *The Wild Irish Boy* the term 'novel' is repeatedly used to describe works of fiction that had declared themselves to be something other than novels. Maturin reduced Owenson, Edgeworth and Surr to the same generic rubric, linking all three by their shared location in an aesthetically compromised literary marketplace. Before looking at *The Milesian Chief* it will be useful to consider the different semantic overtones of terms like 'novel' and 'romance'. *The Milesian Chief* is concerned with the passing away of a particular form of cultural sensibility. As Katie Trumpener notes, it is a structurally and thematically similar in form to the historical novel, "dramatizing the process by which one cultural episteme overlaps with, and gives way to, the next" (148). As Ian Duncan states, the historical novel is marked by a dialectical structure:

> An obsolescent aristocratic idealism subjected to a rude empirical critique and resolved in the privatising aesthetic of a conservative scepticism. (8)

The following chapter will begin by investigating the extent to which *The Milesian Chief* deals with questions of genre, particularly with the relationship between the everyday world of the novel and the idealised world of the romance. Central to this argument will be the relationship between a romantic viewpoint and a rebellious one. I will argue that *The Milesian Chief* shows how heightened sensibility is ultimately eradicated by a modernity that always already defines the parameters within which it can operate. The 'traditional/romantic/cultural' episteme in *The Milesian Chief* is more a subsection of the modern/commercial episteme, rather than a transcendent alternative to it.

Ina Ferris has suggested that by contorting the generic parameters of the national tale and historical romance, Maturin in effect inaugurated "the genre known as Irish Gothic or Protestant Gothic" (*Romantic National Tale*: 102). This is a genre that revels in negativity, undoing the benign solutions offered by Owenson's fictions and replacing them with pessimism and paranoia about the terrifying prospect of annihilation at the hands of a Catholic, Gaelic majority. The attempt by *The Wild Irish Girl* to recuperate Irish history and culture within a modern sensibility is doomed to failure in *The Milesian Chief.* As Ina Ferris points out, Maturin's romance "[pushes] its narrative to where the memory and reason that sustain historical understanding begin to undo themselves" (*Romantic National Tale*: 126). Whereas Owenson could suggest that Macpherson's Ossian has an aesthetic authenticity that renders unimportant debates about historical authenticity, the absence of original Irish poetry from *The Milesian Chief* suggests the impossibility of re-introducing primeval Irish sentiment within an Irish

setting. When Armida asks Connal about a song he is humming, he comments on the impossibility of translating them:

> "The words are beautiful, but I will not be guilty of doing them into English: their intranslateable beauty is like what we are told of the paintings of Herculaneum, which preserve their rich colours in darkness and concealment, but when exposed to the light and modern eyes, fade and perish." (I 184-85)

The romance in which this is said will be interested in the extent to which 'modern eyes' operate. The process of belief that was the result of Mortimer's viewing in *The Wild Irish Boy* is built upon and complicated. However, it is not only a revanchist Gaelic primevalism that adds to the Gothic effect of the novel. *The Milesian Chief* also presents representative cultural agents being overcome by a hostile modernity.

2. Romance and authenticity: Heightened sensibility and cultural performance

The plot concerns the doomed affair between Armida Fitzalban, an Anglo-Italian aristocrat who has fled Naples under threat from Napoleon's armies, and Connal O'Morven, the eldest son of a land agent. The O'Morven's are "a ruined Milesian family" (I 48), dispossessed of their estate by Lord Montclare, Armida's father. Set in the West of Ireland, with a brief but important foray to Dublin, the plot is centred on a hopeless rebellion initiated by Connal under the influence of his 'mad' grandfather, who nurses bardic sentiment and an aggravated sense of historical grievances. A subplot involves the machinations of Lady Montclare, absent for much of the novel, and the diabolic priest Morosini to retain the legal claim to the disputed lands in Connaught by passing a daughter off as a boy

in order to meet the demands of an entail. In a highly unusual move, Maturin has the character of Endymion actually believe she is a boy, leading to a displaced homoerotic relationship between both her and Connal's brother, Desmond. The rebellion fails miserably, due to its lack of organisation, isolated character, and the immediate intervention of government forces. In a climactic scene, bordering on Grand Guignol, Connal and Desmond are executed by a firing squad, Armida poisons herself, and Endymion (now revealed as female and named Ines) dies with a shriek of insanity.

As Robert Miles notes, Maturin's characters seem to labour under an "authenticity deficit" (96). They are only themselves when they are self-consciously performing highly stylised representative roles. Armida stands as a representative of a particular cultural sensibility, a sort of Italianate neo-classicism, while Connal is an amalgam of Ossianic tropes. While Trumpener has noted the origins of Armida's names in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, she does not point out that Connal's surname is equally allusive, Morven being the Scottish realm of the eponymous hero in Macpherson's *Fingal* (1761/62). Their roles as representatives of particular cultural epistemes are parodied within the text itself, however. The clash and contrast between Armida's Italian sensibility and Connal's Milesian one is prefigured by the discussions of the fashionable crowd that Armida encounters in London, en route to Ireland:

> When she sung, the rage of gaming abated for a moment in the adjacent rooms; but after a few stares and bravos, the conversation turned on Moore's ballads, or Braham's Anglo-Italian songs. (I 38)

The staged contrast, and eventual mutual recognition, between Armida and Connal's heightened sensibilities is here parodically prefigured by the fashionable crowd's discussion about Thomas Moore and John Braham. While the London conversation may be initially presented as just another level of background fashionable jargon, it actually prefigures the later debate, replacing the symbolic signification of Armida and Connal as representatives of contrary cultural outlooks with commercialised versions popular among the fashionable crowd. The fashionable crowd that Armida rejects (and is rejected by) does not so much represent a polar opposite from the values that Armida represents, as a modification of it. Indeed, one might see the modernity against which Armida and Connal seem to struggle throughout the novel (and which eventually destroys them) as not so much a break from prior social and cultural formations as an adoption of those formations, albeit debasing them within a consumer society. What Moore and Braham offered were translations, approximations of 'Irish' and 'Italian' sentiments in polite modern forms. *The Milesian Chief*, however, simultaneously denies the possibility of bringing Irish antiquity before modern eyes yet relies on that antiquity for its romantic narrative. The fashionable argument about Moore and Braham is a deliberate move by Maturin to locate his contrast of different aesthetic temperaments within a literary marketplace that governs the production of such a contrast. What separates Moore and Braham from Connal and Armida is the degree of heightened sensibility with which Maturin's characters perform their roles as representatives of particular aesthetic/cultural positions.

While *The Wild Irish Boy* was careful to expunge a potentially dangerous 'false' sensibility from its domestic resolution, *The Milesian Chief* is far more ambivalent about the place of sensibility within modernity. The novel presents Armida and Connal's respective sensibilities being marginalised by a mechanistic state. Wandesford, the English villain of the piece, is easily singled out early in the novel as a representative of a modern *in*sensibility:

> [Armida] continued to speak of Ossian, and her figure, and the motion of her white arms, that involuntarily touched her harp, seemed to realize the visions of the 'soul of song.' She knew not that she was addressing a man who had never read Ossian in his life, and the whole of whose poetical reading had been confined to political satires and bagatelles of the day. (I 23)

The true separation, then, is not between Armida's neo-classicism and Connal's Ossianism, but between their status as cultural performers and a state that is ignorant of and hostile to any notion of aesthetic agency.

I would like to reformulate this separation by suggesting that in *The Milesian Chief* we have a conflict between the romantic and the quotidian. This conflict is summed up by Connal when he is travelling to Dublin in order to seek a pardon for the rebellion. Forced to work as a labourer to gain passage on a barge, he reflects on the difference between romantic heroism and everyday drudgery:

> At length, sinking into a corner of the deck, he quietly plied his humble task, and smiled occasionally at the terrifying tales repeated by the passengers, who were talking to each other of the rebel chief O'Morven.
> "How much easier is it," thought Connal, "to be the hero of a moment, to wind up the heart to its utmost pitch of suffering and of strength, and bid it rest, than to wear life away in these petty struggles, that corrode the strength as the Alps were mined away by vinegar, and leave us without consolation or dignity." (III : 190)

3. Locating the everyday: The use of the chronotope in *The Milesian Chief*

Claude Fierobe has seen the Dublin scenes in *The Milesian Chief* as being all of piece with the general mood of the novel:

> [À] Dublin nous retrouvons strictement les mêmes personages (Connal, Desmond, Gabriella, Mary), pris dans le même réseau tragique d'éches et de malheur...[un] simple déplacement dans l'espace ne remet pas en cause la topologie essentialle d'une ouevre qui reste, avant tout, le roman d'amour...(267)

While Fierobe is right to note that the air of tragic romantic love and passionate hyperbole that pervades the work is simply continued in the Dublin scenes, it is possible to see a greater significance at work. Rather than enacting a 'simple displacement', Maturin is in these scenes conflating two generic registers, that of the novel and the romance. Connal's revulsion at the drudgery of his work on the canal, however, is in implicit contrast to the extent to which he dutifully performs his labours. The everyday work that he reacts against is actually something he is quite good at:

> [In] a short time his mildness, his humility, and the readiness with which he undertook even the meanest task, encouraged them [i.e. his fellow passengers] to treat him with a familiarity, which, though he retreated from, he could not repel. (III 190)

The national tale dealt with a sense of place that often emphasises the extent to which the 'exotic' site of the primitive operates as an enclosed space of its own, shielded from a developmental historical sense in what Bakhtin has called the adventure-time chronotope. As Leerssen points out, this is the setting for much of *The Milesian Chief*, where "all periods of the

Irish past are conflated into an undifferentiated 'erstwhile', and eternal, primeval conflict" (*Remembrance*: 46). For Bakhtin, this chronotope ('time-space') was essentially a non-developmental site:

> In this kind of time, nothing changes: the world remains as it was, the biographical life of the heroes does not change, their feelings do not change, people do not even age. This empty time leaves no traces anywhere, no indications of its passing. This, we repeat, is an extratemporal hiatus that appears between two moments of a real time sequence. (*Dialogic*: 91)

As Joep Leerssen points out, this chronotope is one of the "formative notions" (*Remembrance*: 226) in literary representations of Ireland and more particularly Connaught, that 'classic ground' of Irish national character for Mortimer in *The Wild Irish Girl.* It leads to what Kevin Whelan, in discussing Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*, has called the "freeze-frame" ('Writing Ireland': 198) approach to the exoticised representation of Irish culture. This is an approach that cannot in and of itself be used to animate a sense of historical agency. He can only conclude that once the novel falls back into a more Whiggish and Enlightened historiography it is shown that "[Owenson's] Gaelic spool can only reel obsessively backwards" ('Writing Ireland': 198). When historical ruptures occur in *The Wild Irish Girl,* they are presented as being part of a continuous and not necessarily progressive notion of history. Mortimer's ancestors may have won the lands in Connaught by the sword, but the Milesians before them had done so as well. The adventure-time chronotope is one in which there is a type of constant revolution, but one which is safely exoticised and distanced from the metropolitan audience.

The chronotope is fundamental to the romantic register, which, as Ian Duncan has pointed out in relation to Gothic romance, "marks a decisive alienation of novelistic representation from its official province, 'real life and manners, and the time in which it is written" (20-21). 'Romance' marks a form that is discontinuous with 'history'. Structured around a non-progressive chronotope, romance deals with the exploits of a hero/heroine, events that have a determinative effect on the social formations surrounding them. As mentioned in the introduction, for Hume and Scottish enlightenment historiography, 'society' was the determinative agent in historical progress. The central place in the polity of the virtuous individual citizen of classical republican theory was gradually replaced by an emphasis on the importance of sympathy and polite society. *The Milesian Chief* can be read as providing a contrast between these two versions of agency. At key points in Maturin's romance the representatives of 'romance', Connal and Armida, are literally carried along by modern crowds. More importantly, these crowds are consumers of cultural productions, belonging to a commercial modernity. Before looking at these scenes and considering how they might be important in assessing *The Milesian Chief*, it will be useful to examine how Maturin deals with the question of genre in his preface.

In Joep Leerssen's opinion, "the hybrid vacillation of Morgan and Maturin between a novelistic and a romantic register seriously flaws their Irish tales, often to the point of ludicrousness" (*Remembrance*: 52). I would agree that there is a vacillation between both registers, but it is important not to dismiss this so easily. Rather, by examining the methods by which

Maturin varied these two registers we can appreciate the level of subtlety he displays in approaching the question of genre. Maturin prefaced this third novel, a self-declared romance, with one of his most famous characterisations of his powers as a novelist:

> If I possess any talent, it is that of darkening the gloomy, and of deepening the sad; of painting life in extremes, and representing those struggles of passion when the soul trembles on the verge of the unlawful and the unhallowed. (I iv-v)

What seems to be promised from this, then, is a Gothic romance dealing with taboo areas of religious and sexual taboo, 'unlawful' and 'unhallowed' plots of Gothic gloom and romantic extremes. The next paragraph, however, alters these expectations by suggesting that the work in front of us will take this talent and "apply these powers to the scenes of actual life" (I v). According to the preface, Ireland is a perfect location for such an experiment in generic hybridity:

> I have chosen my own country for the scene, because I believe it the only country on earth, where, from the strange existing opposition of religion, politics, and manners, the extremes of refinement and barbarism are united, and the most wild and incredible situations of romantic story are hourly passing before modern eyes. (I v)

The statement that romantic events are "passing before modern eyes", however, actually recalls Clara Reeve's influential differentiation between the novel and the romance:

> The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes. (I 111)

The novel is presented then as a hybrid site where actual life and what passes before modern eyes will be displayed, while the romantic/Gothic

register will be also included to the setting of Ireland. Ireland becomes the location in which the discontinuous forms of experience and agency are united.

In Reeve's formulation, the novel deals with everyday experience in such a way as to deceive the reader into a belief that such things might actually come to pass:

> The perfection of it, is to represent every scene, on so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distress, of the persons in the story, as if they were our own. (I 111)

The novel belongs, in the words of Franco Moretti, to "a phenomenology that makes normality interesting and meaningful *as* normality" (11 Emphasis in original). Maturin very consciously labels his novel a romance, though, thereby implicitly suggesting identification with stories in which improbable events and overwrought emotions are depicted.

4. The relationship between 'romance' and 'history' in *The Milesian Chief*

The use of the term romance seems to indicate some form of narrative discontinuous with progressive ideas of history; "the narrative form of a historical otherness, a representation discontinuous with modern cultural formations" (Duncan: 57). Like Owenson, Maturin appeals to respected authorities on antiquarian matters in *The Milesian Chief* in order to authenticate his descriptions of certain Irish manners. Maturin has three footnotes in the novel. All three occur in the first volume and all three refer moments in the novel to Edward Ledwich's *The Antiquities of Ireland*

(1790). The exclusive use of Ledwich by Maturin is suggestive. Ledwich had presented himself as a sharp corrective to the type of historical myths that he saw being propagated by (specifically Catholic) antiquarians. Ledwich's preface to the 1790 edition was written as an attempt to present himself as, to quote Oliver MacDonagh, "an enlightenment man, bent on dissipating by eighteenth-century sunlight what he called the bardic fictions which had enveloped early Irish history" (1). Ledwich was unapologetically committed to dispelling the very type of historiography and antiquarianism that was such an important source and reference point for national (and nationalist) fiction in the early nineteenth-century. His preface presents himself as combative writer and historian of integrity:

> The task would have been easier, perhaps more popular to have applied my time, and the little learning I possess, to an elucidation and confirmation of our mythologic history: but then I should have proclaimed my ignorance of its fictitious origin, of the low estimation in which it is held by the learned, and inquisitive of every Country, and what would have been infinitely more blameable, I should have written against the conviction of my own mind.
>
> Some confidence in the cause I was engaged in, which appeared to me that of truth, has probably inspired a temerity of expression and of censure, which on any other subject had been better retained. I confess I have taken but little pains to correct this error, if it be such, because here truths were to be delivered in strong language; the numerous defenders of our bardic fictions and historical romances being ever on the watch, and ready to convert guarded expressions and modest diffidence into strong symptoms of a weak cause. (Iii-iv)

Ledwich had his own prejudices, and his work was attacked for its selective use of texts and its strongly anti-Catholic and anti-Irish bias (see McCartney 'Writing of History'). His book was republished in 1804, significantly propping up an increasingly pro-British historiographical project of presenting Irish culture as barbarous in the wake of 1798 and Emmet's

insurrection of 1803 (Leerssen *Mere Irish*: 373). The important point to note is that he is concerned to differentiate his work from what he sees as the historical romances of nationalist historians. The use of Ledwich by Maturin is ironic, therefore, in that one of the most vocal critics of a 'romantic' approach to Irish historiography is used in order to provide a note of authenticity to a self-proclaimed historical romance set in Ireland.

The novel itself has one of its characters, Rose St Austin, transform from a reader of history to a sentimental 'reader' of the romance of Connal and Armida. She is the niece of a clergyman, and the first meeting between Rose and Armida is described by one character as "conducted according to the statutes of romance" (I 79). Armida renames her Rosine, and expresses bafflement at a character who seems to live outside of the state of overwrought emotion that she exists at:

> "While reading only plunges me into reverie, and music brings images to me, like those of a dream, which I try in vain to define, Rosine employs every hour, though she hardly reads any thing but history, and never has ventured to play or sing for company in her life. Her talents are mediocre: a thousand times a day I feel the superiority of my mind to hers, but what avails a superiority that does not procure happiness." (I 90-91)

Rosine is differentiated from Armida's heightened sensibility. The two traits that Armida finds hardest to accept are that she reads only 'history', and that she does not perform in public. The kind of public performance that Armida enacts is alien to Rosine. By the end of the novel, though, Rosine will perform the private role of 'reader' of the romance of Armida and Connal:

> There is an ash-tree that grows near their graves: Rosine loves to sit under its shade, and hear the evening wind murmur through its branches: the thoughts that visit her there elevate her heart, while they fill her eyes with tears; and she feels that even grief, refined by the consciousness of futurity,

> is beyond all the joys of mortality. When the darkness warns her home, she casts her eye as she departs on the simple inscription placed by St. Austin on the grave of Connal [...] 'Thou sleepest, but we do not forget thee.' (IV: 203-204)

It is a trope from sentimental fiction, and we can compare it to the ending of MacKenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, in which the unnamed narrator visits the grave of Harley: "I sometimes visit his grave; I sit in the hollow of the tree" (93). Rosine therefore partakes of the sentimental effect that we as readers are invited to feel at the narrative of Armida and Connal, a sentiment that is divorced from the political threat of revolutionary violence. Romance here acts as a way of containing 'history', particularly when that history is potentially subversive and rebellious. Cultural performance is replaced by cultural consumption, the reader replacing the performer.

5. Locating rebellion in romance and modernity

By the end of the novel the reader is asked to sympathise with Rosine's position, but the 'romance' overall argues against the adoption of 'romance' as a structuring principle for observing the Irish situation. In this way it differs from *The Wild Irish Girl*. While Owenson's novel adopted Burke by pointing out the importance of tradition, Maturin emphasises the extent to which a Burkean conservatism might actually have the opposite effect if applied to an Irish setting. The valorisation of tradition in Ireland leads to a disenchanted and seditious peasantry. This is a concern that was already expressed by Burke. As Luke Gibbons points out, "Burke feared that the veneration of the past in the Catholic peasantry would fuse with the revolutionary fervour of Jacobinism" (*Edmund Burke*: 162-63). As Gibbons notices in Burke, custom, the very bedrock of English state stability, is

transformed in the colonial system into a potentially disruptive source of rebellion (*Edmund Burke*: 163-165). In Surr's *A Winter in London* the romantic thoughts inspired in Montagu by the Beauchamp estate are perfectly consonant with the future stability of the state. Hence, the Beauchamp heritage is co-opted by the Roseville's, and the novel ends with a sense of reconciliation between the old and new. Connal lives with his grandfather in a remote castle, but his inculcation in 'Milesian' culture has an opposite effect to the one described by Surr (and Owenson). Here, heritage leads to insurrections against the state. In his own words, Connal describes how his indoctrination into Irish bardic culture leads him to rebel against the colonial situation in Ireland:

> "At night, seated in the hall at my grandfather's feet, I listened to the harp and the legend till I believed them true as inspiration, and my heart burned and beat for the time 'ere the emerald gem of the western world was set in the crown of a stranger.'" (III 50)

The romantic enthusiasm that he feels cools down, and it as this point that he realises the impossibility of an independent and autarkic Ireland:

> "I found, when my brain cooled, that it was impossible for Ireland to subsist as an independent country; impossible for her to exist without dependence on the continental powers, or a connexion with England." (III 52)

Maturin explicitly links Connal's rebellion to that of Robert Emmet's, being "the isolated and hopeless attempt of a single enthusiast" (II 143). As Ruán O'Donnell points out, Emmet in the first decade after his rebellion was remembered more for "the pathos of his early death, his stoic conduct in the dock and his doomed relationship with Sarah Curran than his political convictions" (192). At the same time as Maturin connects Connal to Emmet he simultaneously suggests that there seems to be no connection "between

this and the rebellion of 1798" (II 143). I would argue that Maturin on one level of the novel removes both Connal's and Emmet's rebellions from the republican rebellion of 1798 in order to disassociate them from the threatening modernity of 1798. That rebellion, after all, had been characterised by its importation of French revolutionary principles into Ireland rather than the restitution of some primitive Milesian culture. Connal's above quoted acknowledgement that Ireland cannot exist as an independent country at least partially indicates an awareness that French aid would be necessary to continue the revolution. However, the trip to Dublin by Connal subtly references Emmet's rebellion by having Connal walk through some of the main sites of that rebellion. Emmet's rebellion may have been 'romantic', yet it still occurred not in some exotic chronotope but on the streets of the modern capital – the one place where Mortimer in *The Wild Irish Girl* had dismissed as a location of Irish national character. For Maturin, on the other hand, Dublin was where the insecurity of Ireland was most readily felt. As he commented in *The Wild Irish Boy*, the most spectacular failure that the Union was guilty of was in the lack of security that saw "a troop of rebels [march] within half a furlong of the Castle of Dublin" (III 140).

The earlier reference to Thomas Moore can be read in a different light once Maturin makes his connections between Connal and Emmet. The *Irish Melodies* that Moore began to publish from 1808 onwards were involved in a process of romanticising the ideals of the United Irishmen whilst removing them from associations of violence and savagery. As

Marianne Elliott suggests, Moore was involved in a 'repackaging' of Gaelic culture for a modern audience:

> It was a repackaging of potentially dangerous ideas, 'softening and sugaring' them in such a way that militant and constitutional nationalism could take what they liked from them. (*Robert Emmet*: 119)

Moore provided (in Maturin's view) commercial versions of the aesthetic temperaments embodied in Connal and Armida. His sentimental lyrics allowed a romanticisation of rebellion, displacing actual violence into sentimental tales (in the more famous lyrics, drawing their effects from the romantic love between Sarah Curran and Emmet). The romanticisation of Connal's rebellion will not, however, be carried through the whole of the Maturin's novel. Maturin was obviously aware that by mentioning Moore so early on in his fiction he was implicitly placing his own novel within a similar discourse of romantic (and commercial) sentimental nationalism. Maturin, however, replaces the bodily horror of rebellion that is passed over in Moore. As Ina Ferris points out, the novel undercuts "the whole notion of history as piety on which all nationalist models...depend":

> In the desperate night marches, hand-to-hand battles, desolate caves, and trackless moors of the rebellion chapters, the sustaining values of patriotic history...give way as bodies, as well as buildings, are repeatedly brought to literal ruin. (*Romantic National Tale*: 117)

Increasingly, Connal's rebellion is linked to 1798, with explicit references to particular skirmishes in the fictional rebellion being linked to ones in the historical one.[12] The rebellion finally ends in a battle that is "so totally

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[12] At one point Connal sees enemy troops approaching and arranges his men in a particular formation, "remembering the event of the engagement in 1798, in which the Lords O'Neil and Mountjoy fell" (III 109). This would seem to indicate that Connal had been present at, or at least was well acquainted with, the rebellion in Wexford. This gives added credence

unlike to modern war, that it seemed like the contest of two savage nations in their deserts" (IV: 85).

The Wild Irish Girl had not ignored 1798. In fact, the rebellion is constantly mentioned. As I argued in the introduction, Owenson's novel was concerned with creating a new concept of virtue that differed from classical republicanism in that agency now resides in the cultural performance of a woman within a private setting. Virtue, in the republican sense, had been a central quality that the United Irishmen had tried to inculcate in the populace. Kevin Whelan has commented on how the dying words of the United Irishman William Michael Byrne demonstrated how the concept of virtue was central to the United Irish project: "No one political action or sentiment of my life has ever been actuated by any other motive than a wish to promote the cause of virtue" (quoted in *Tree of Liberty*: 60). In *Paddy's Resource* (1795), a chapbook of United Irishmen ballads printed in Belfast, the list of 'Toasts and Sentiments' includes, among many statements of patriotism, one to "The pulse of Sydney (*sic*)" (96), placing the United Irishmen in that tradition of Whig republican civic humanism that, as I remarked in my introduction, had Algernon Sidney as one of its guiding saints. Owenson, however, moved nationalism from a civic foundation to a cultural one. The character most clearly associated with virtue in the civic humanist tradition, Mortimer's father, disguises himself as "some unfortunate gentleman who had attached himself to the rebellious faction of the day" (214). Mortimer's own disguise as an artist, as Mary Jean Corbett argues, enacts "the displacement of political violence by an ostensibly more

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to Piper's and Jeffares' contention that Maturin may have based Connal at least partially on

benign aesthetic" (66). It also allows Owenson to re-locate virtue from the political male to the cultural female. Civic nationalism is here replaced by cultural nationalism, and Owenson goes out of her way to separate the romance of the west of Ireland from the terrors of 1798. In a charged footnote she argues that the worst excesses of the rebellion occurred in Wexford, "an English colony planted by Henry the second" (176 n.1), as opposed to Connaught:

> Strongly as the ancient British character may be found extant in the natives of *Wexford and its environs*, equally pure will be the primitive character of the Irish be met with in the provinces of *Connaught and Munster*; yet if the footstep of resistance was sometimes impressed on that soil, which had been the asylum of *ancient* Irish independence, its *track* was bloodless. (177 n.1 Emphasis in the original)

Maturin's novel, however, cannot so easily separate Irish primitivism from bloody and sectarian rebellion. The romantic strain in Owenson's national tale is problematised, its role in a domestic resolution of national conflict shown as impossible.

This obviously differs fundamentally from the way a primeval culture was presented in *The Wild Irish Girl*. In *The Milesian Chief* that culture and Connal's immersion in it is presented as a Gothic eruption into the present day. For Armida, it has direct parallels with the supernatural disturbances that characterise Gothic fiction:

> [The] two youths, her cousins, nursed amid the strife of pride and want, so favourable to the romantic spirit that appeases the gnawings of actual distress by listening to tales of high-seated ancestry, that comforts itself in being compelled to inhabit ruins by tracing among them the remains of ancient palaces; that like the spirit in Otranto stalks amid its ancient seat till it smells beyond it, and stands forth amid the

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the experiences of the Wexford rebel commander Bagenal Harvey (276).

> fragments dilated and revealed, terrifying the intrusion of modern usurpers. (I 52)

The nationalism that Connal represents is a spectral, gothic marker of locality. Speaking of Maria Edgeworth's and Sydney Owenson's Irish tales, Anne Fogarty has argued that "the belief of these writers in a future which will be uncontaminated by the conflicts of the past is persistently undermined by the spectres of history which haunt their texts" (126). However, Fogarty in many ways elides the degree of closure with which both novelists contain the potentially 'Gothic' elements in their texts. Mortimer may indeed hallucinate early in the novel that Glorvina is a Gorgon (*Wild Irish Girl*: 60), but this initial threat is pacified by the end of the novel.[13] The deployment of images of spectres in *The Wild Irish Girl* and Edgeworth's fiction is gradually erased, as the exotic culture that gave rise to such supernatural agency becomes aestheticised and framed within a particular chronotope. In *The Milesian Chief*, as the above quotations suggest, that Gothic register is always bursting out onto the modern consciousness.

The collapse of the national tale's structuring principle of romance is most clearly seen though in the character of Connal's grandfather. It is he who represents the bardic heritage, but it is a heritage that is taken beyond the limits of sanity. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, the move from civic nationalism

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[13] By having Mortimer see a 'gorgon', Owenson may have been referencing Richard Musgrave's *A Concise Account of the Material Events and Atrocities which Occurred in the Present Rebellion with the Causes which Produced them, and an Answer to Veritas' Vindication of the Roman Catholic Clergy of the Town of Wexford* (1799). Responding to attempts to present Catholic massacres of Protestants in 1798 as being mostly directed against Orangemen, Musgrave insisted that such attempts to explain these episodes were "an artful attempt to hide the grim, the hideous, the gorgon visage of Popery" (quoted in Kelly: 216-17). If it is the case that Owenson had Musgrave in mind then we can read this reference to Glorvina's gorgon face as less a marker of some spectral historical disturbance

to cultural nationalism relied on both Mortimer and Glorvina believing that the other was a representative of their respective nation. This process of belief was necessary in order for the marriage to have the symbolic capital that it did. In *The Milesian Chief* the character of the grandfather represents an insane exaggeration of this belief. Just as Mortimer learned that in the West of Ireland the invasion of Henry II is considered a recent event, Armida learns that O'Morven can mistake her for Queen Elizabeth. The historical continuity that the English traveller in the national tale must have in order for the marriage to have the symbolic significance here actually leads to a dangerous situation, in which that process of belief actually marks the foreigner as the locus of revenge for a warped sense of Irish historical grievances:

> "Traitress!" he exclaimed, though speaking English with difficulty; "traitress! you are in my power at last: you shall at last feel it. I know you well, though you assume that appearance of youth and beauty to deceive me. You are the Queen of England: the false daughter of the heretic Henry. You have dispossessed me of my rightful dominion: - I am a prince, as you are, though I am chained down in this cave. See the fetters with which you have loaded me," he cried, tearing up handfuls of the straw on which he lay: "I lie here in misery and famine, while you and your father revel in my castle: but now I will have my revenge." (III 157-58)

Here we have the native Irish person assigning an essentialist, transhistorical identity on the English visitor. However, the madness of O'Morven is not enough in and of itself to threaten Armida. In order for that to happen, she must be exposed to a much more revolutionary and threatening form of gaze. The romantic nationalism that she compares to a Gothic spectre is not, ultimately, the most threatening aspect of the

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than as part of Mortimer's initial prejudices that are overcome through the course of the

revolution. Instead, we are presented with a character, Brennan, who represents a revolution shorn of its romantic Gaelic autochthonous nature. Brennan's brief but important role belies the number of pages given to him. Both nephew and pupil of a priest, Brennan represents a potent sexual threat to Armida once Connal has left for Dublin:

> [F]rom the moment he beheld Armida, all his passions had been concentrated into one: and hatred for Connal, and a daring love for Armida, felt like the same sensation in his breast. (III: 134)

Brennan represents the real threat to Armida. Seamus Deane, in speaking of Burke's lament about the passing of the age of chivalry, regards the difference between a traditional and revolutionary method of looking. The traditional viewpoint is described as specular, in which "a person is seen as an emblematic figure in a hierarchical system" (*Strange Country*: 11). In the revolutionary look, however, "a traditional emblem loses its fixed value and becomes vulnerable to risk" (*Strange Country*: 11). The rebellion in *The Milesian Chief* allows Brennan to look at Armida and pose a sexual threat:

> "Are you in your father's castle again, with all the world at your feet flattering you? Brennan was a poor labourer then, that hardly dared to raise his eyes to you as you passed; yet even then I dared to love you, and now I dare to tell you so: What should hinder me?" (III: 138-139)

In effect, he is doing to Armida what the French revolutionaries, in Burke's powerfully charged description, did to Marie Antoinette. Just as the Jacobin scheme of things progressively reduced a queen to a woman, and from then on to an animal, Brennan strips Armida of her symbolic capital. Brennan leads her to the cave where Connal's mad grandfather resides. Armida is caught between the old man's delirium and Brennan's modern hostility. She

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novel.

finds herself caught between the equally destructive representatives of rabidly transhistorical Gaelic madness and modern revolutionary sexual rapacity.

Brennan is an interesting character in that he represents a modern revolutionary sexual rapacity. He plays an important part in Maturin's overall scheme of gradually de-romanticising the rebellion. When Connal is returning to Connaught after his sojourn in Dublin, some of his own men, who have been motivated by Brennan, attack him. The rebel army, we are told, are led by "the daring spirit of Brennan... into every excess of violence" (IV 47). However, he is not the only threatening representation of a revanchist Irish modernity. Randall O'Morven, the father of Connal and Desmond, is in his own way representative of a far greater threat to the status quo than Connal's rebellion. He is a threat because he understands better than Connal or Armida where agency resides in the modern world. Unlike the supposedly dignified central characters, he is presented as without dignity:

> [He] possessed the worst kind of Irish character, a character of unfeeling, unworthy self-enjoyment, not destitute of affection, but wholly without dignity. (I 65)

Randall takes a position at Lord Montclare's castle as a servant. He repudiates any claims to a Milesian heritage he might have, and Maturin makes it clear that he does so due to the fact that he recognises that that kind of cultural and symbolic agency does not translate into economic or political capital:

> "Do you think that poring over an old Irish manuscript, or wandering over these wild shores, listening to an old harp with hardly a string to it will put a potatoe [sic]in your mouth,

> or give one stone to repair those ruins you live in, or bring you back your land to you again?" (I 66)

He implicitly damns himself by arguing that Connal "would scorn to eat the bread from your [i.e. Lord Montclare's] hand that I am swallowing now" (I 67). Randall's comments, though, are, I would argue, deliberately similar to the comments of another native Irish servant, Thady Quirk, from Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800). Thady's narrative of faithful service to the Rackrent family ends when his son Jason purchases the bankrupt estate and evicts the former owner:

> Oh, Jason! Jason! How will you stand to this in the face of the country and all who know you?' says I; 'and what will people think and say, when they see you living here in Castle Rackrent, and the lawful owner turned out of the seat of his ancestors, without a cabin to put his head into, or so much as a potato to eat?' (109)

What enables Jason Quirk to acquire Castle Rackrent is his grasp of modern commercial and legal realities, "a dramatically less chivalric but determined activity" (Deane *Strange Country*: 38) than the 'traditional' Rackrent family possess. Randall O'Morven is a similar character, conflating both the ambivalent loyalty of Thady Quirk with the opportunistic nature of Jason Quirk, and this type of character recurs in Maturin's novels, with Brennan and the character of Macowen in *Women* being primary examples. The reason that these characters are villains in Maturin's eyes is due to two factors. Firstly, as the above quote about Randall makes clear, they are without 'dignity', that trait that is fundamental to the national tale's claims for the country it seeks to represent. Dignity is here used in a way similar to

the Kantian formulation[14] – Randall relinquishes his claim dignity by 'selling' himself to the Montclare's. Secondly, the type of character Randall represents is one who cannot be safely contained within an exoticised portrait of Irish national character. Randall changes sides as he sees this as a more efficacious way of regaining the lost estate. His complaint about Connal's immersion in Milesian culture is grounded by the fact that such an immersion is unlikely to bring about any material change in the ownership of the land. Against Connal's romantic idealism, then, he represents a practical materialism. For Maturin, that is as threatening, if not more so, than Connal's rebellion, as it locates the revanchist impulse in Irish national character within modernity rather than a romantic past.

6. Crowd scenes in *The Milesian Chief*: Consuming culture and threatening rebellion

The imbrication of modernity and rebellion, however, becomes central in the London and Dublin episodes of the novel. These are the points at which the performative cultural agency of Connal and Armida is literally swamped by modern cultural consumption. Armida, it has already been suggested, suffers from the context of England's fashionable society. Her very individuality marks her off from the fashionable crowd: "she wanted the uniform corps of fashion, that identity of costume which for a season transforms the whole female world into the representation of one figure" (I 39). An interesting sentence, in that it deliberately raises the question of representation, yet as with the mentioning of Moore and Braham, locates it

[14] Maturin is unlikely to have been fully aware of Kant's philosophy until its popularisation

within a consumerist paradigm rather than in Armida's cultural performance. In Paris she is feted for being a representation of classical culture:

> Armida's form revived all the images of classic beauty: Armida's songs recalled all the wonders of the classic fables: Armida's genius realized the glories of classic antiquity. (I 35)

However, Armida, formerly associated with artistic representation in Paris and Italy, is in London marginalised due to her inability to partake of a mode of fashionable representation. When Wandesford follows her to London, he finds her adrift in a crowd:

> Armida, alone, unattended, unadmired, addressed by no tongue, defended by no arm from the crowd that bore her on like an uprooted flower in a boisterous flood, seeming from her beauty, and from her loneliness feeling like the inhabitant of another world. (I 41)

A crowd similarly swamps Connal once he arrives in Dublin:

> As he crossed Dame street to Fownes street, he was suddenly involved in a crowd of whom so many were females, that he could not extricate himself without an effort of strength he would not employ, and delicately attentive to women, he assisted and protected those who were near him, till he found himself involuntarily drawn into the theatre. (III 192)

Connal cannot leave this crowd due to his chivalric beliefs in regard to the treatment of women. In marked contrast to Armida, who was trapped in a crowd that offered her no protection, Connal is here the protector of "a well-dressed female" (III 192). In other words, he is linked to the form of chivalric (romantic) behaviour that is noticeably absent in the modern urban crowd. The theatrical performance is "Catalani's benefit" (III 193). We have a performance that explicitly takes part in a commercial world. It also links Armida to the actual famous performer, Madame Catalani. The

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by Madame De Staël in *On Germany* (1813).

women that Connal becomes immersed in are cultural consumers, not cultural producers. Armida's performances are linked by Connal to Catalani's:

> [At] that moment she [i.e. Madame Catalani] appeared on the stage, and the first notes she uttered rivetted him to the spot. Armida's exquisite tones, and that peculiar style that belonged only to those two singers of all he had ever heard, rose with painful sweetness to his recollection. (III 193)

His emotional reaction to the music leads the 'well-dressed female' to remark on his "sensibility" (III 194).

Connal, however, is drawn into another crowd of women later in Dublin. This time, however, the women are prostitutes:

> As he passed the corner of the street he was assailed by a cluster of unfortunate women, from whom he found it impossible to extricate himself without a force he was unwilling to use. He evaded them for some time, till sickened by their coarse importunities, he was compelled to break from them by main strength. (III 215-16)

What we are presented with here is a repetition of the earlier crowd scene (even repeating some of the terms), yet with women radically recast as commodities themselves. The prostitutes are the ultimate examples of commodified people. Walter Benjamin's remark that the prostitute "may be considered, from early on, a precursor of commodity capitalism" (*Arcades Project*: 348) can be seen to be prefigured by Maturin. Amongst these women Connal finds Mary, a young woman who had been seduced by Wandesford and abandoned, and is now near death with famine. It is a melodramatic scene and one which allows Connal to display his sensibility, as Maturin presents us with the sentimental tableau of "the daring leader of

the rebels [weeping] over a perishing prostitute" (III 217).[15] This is in harsh contrast to the manner in which Wandesford treats Mary. Of course, as remarked earlier, insensibility is the defining feature of his character. The episode in Dublin with Mary also shows how Connal's benevolence is contrasted with the sordid moneymaking of a publican he asks for assistance from:

> A man followed him [Connal] to where she was leaning against the corner of the house; but when he saw her rags, her squalid face, and the filth with which she was covered from her fall, with a savage oath he bid Connal take care of his strumpet himself.
> [...]
> He went [the man], and returned with some wretched wine, which he refused to let her taste till he was paid for it. (III 218, 219)

Connal's presence in Dublin does not simply further the novel's theme close ties between the national tale's images of female cultural performativity and female cultural consumption or allow the reader to admire Connal's sensibility. Maturin has Connal stay on Francis Street, in the area of Dublin known as the Liberties. Francis Street and the surrounding streets had been the central locations of Emmet's uprising in 1803. Indeed, the chief secretary Lord Castlereagh noted that Emmet himself had escaped from the ensuing riot down Francis Street and from there to the south of the city and into the Wicklow mountains (quoted in Killen: 199). The one person that is known to Connal, a former servant of

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[15] The imagery of the scene with Mary is lifted from Henry MacKenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), in which we are presented with "a crowd of those wretches who wait the uncertain wages of prostitution" (32). One lays hold of the arm of the hero, Harley, and asks him for a pint of wine, to which he responds by bringing her to a tavern "where the dearness of the wine is a discharge in full for the character of the house" (33). The prostitute is revealed to have been a virtuous young lady led astray by a libertine, and forced to enter prostitution. MacKenzie does not account for his hero's intentions in helping the prostitute: "From what impulse he did this we do not mean to enquire; as it has ever been against our nature to search for motives where bad ones are to be found." (33)

his grandfather, resides on Francis Street and it is there that Connal stays.[16] The Liberties had been hotbeds of pro-United Irish sentiment, a poor area in the south-west quarter of the city in which the United Irishmen had had considerable success in recruitment (Graham, Tommy: 136-146). In the 1803 rebellion, the area around Francis Street saw most of the violence with which Emmet's rebellion was associated. It surely cannot be simply a coincidence that having linked Connal to Emmet, Maturin has him stay in Francis Street when he comes to Dublin.

The crowds in Dublin, then, manage to overwhelm the rebel leader, and Maturin uses the Dublin scenes to draw a subtle parallel with the 1803 rebellion of Emmet. Tales of 1798 and 1803 both contained stories of threatening immersion in a rebel crowd. Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801), a rapidly anti-Catholic and loyalist account of 1798, is full of graphic accounts of atrocities committed by the (Catholic) rebel forces against innocent victims who are unlucky enough to be surrounded by the enemy. Musgrave's accounts are full of such images. In particular, there are many examples of female crowds of rebels, some of which are presented as even more bloodthirsty than the men. Recounting the story of a Mrs. Jones, whose husband and brother-in-law are victims at the infamous massacre of Protestants at Scullabogue, Musgrave tells how her attempt to leave with the two bodies is frustrated by a group of rebel women:

> [When] she had led the car to some distance, she was stopped by a party of rebel women, who led it back, and compelled her to return with them. They urged the rebels to put her to

[16] The servant is called Delany (III 224), perhaps a reference by Maturin to Emmet's leading co-conspirator Malachy Delaney, who had been active in the raising support for the rebellion in Kildare and Wicklow (Geoghegan: 128).

> death... John Murphy, their captain, prevented them, having said, that such a horrid deed would kindle a blush on the cheeks of the Virgin Mary. (428-429)[17]

Another example of the presentation of rebel crowds can be gleaned from a pamphlet published in 1799, purporting to be the narrative of Charles Jackson, a Protestant resident of Wexford. This gives a flavour of the type of depiction of crowds that narratives of rebellion contained. Being accompanied to his house by a rebel captain, Jackson notes the disorder of the rebel crowds:

> We passed through crowds of rebels, who were in the most disorderly state, without the least appearance of discipline. They had no kind of uniform, but were most of them in the dress of labourers, white bands round their hats and green cockades being the only marks by which they were distinguished. They made a most fantastic appearance, many having decorated themselves with parts of the apparel of ladies, found in houses which they had plundered. Some wore ladies' hats and feathers; others, caps, bonnets, and tippets... They were accompanied by great numbers of women shouting and huzzaing for the *Croppies*... It was impossible for a mob to be more wild and frantic: - many of them seemed to be in a state of intoxication. (6-7 Italics in original)

Note that Jackson points out the number of women who accompany the rebels, "crying, Who now dare say '*Croppies, lie down?*'" (7). It is a striking, though representative, example of the dangerous confusion that the rebel crowd engendered. The crowd is here marked by its disorganisation and intoxication, and the fact that no two rebels are exactly alike. Jackson, his wife, and their new-born child are threatened by a crowd that breaks down representation, even eliding male and female forms of dress. The rebel crowd breaks down simple forms of signification, such as apparel. Musgrave includes a description of the wives of rebels in Wexford, of

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[17] John D. Beatty refers to this story as "possibly apocryphal" (115).

"fantastic appearance, with the elegant apparel of protestant ladies of Wexford, put over their homely dress" (454). There is a gross disjunction between their appearance and intent, as Musgrave reports that "some were seen mounted on horseback, with handsome veils, having at the same time pikes in their hands" (454). Here, the representative function of the fashionable crowd in London that Armida observes, buckles under the sheer heterogeneity of different signifiers at work. These crowds resist interpretation, being anarchic destroyers of boundaries between classes, religions, and even genders.

The rebel army that Connal raises ends up becoming a disorganised body of 'banditti' terrorising the local countryside:

> The discipline that Connal had established was destroyed: instead of confining themselves to the islands, they had spread themselves along the shore, exercising every outrage and aggression on the inhabitants; and, from the indiscriminate admission of every vagabond and profligate into the ranks, their numbers had increased beyond all power of control, and the spirit of humanity and honour, that Connal had tried to inspire them with, was utterly extinguished. (IV 47-48)

The rebel army has become "a rabble mad for rapine, and intoxicated with the success which had hitherto attended their incursions" (IV 48).

The presentation of the revolutionary crowd in Musgrave, Jackson, and Maturin generally suggests that it is one composed of 'drunken men' and, in the case of the first two writers, revolutionary women, the latter similar to the revolutionary 'harpies' that Burke had described as engulfing the royal family on the march from Versailles:

> [The] royal captives who followed in the train were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the

> unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women. (165)

This is an image of femininity in Burke that is fundamentally and deliberately different to the presentation of Marie Antoinette. As Deirdre Lynch argues, when Burke describes the women's march on Versailles or women's presence in the National Assembly, "he sees prostitution" (46). This is due the conservative view which has difficulty acknowledging female agency within the public space. In *The Milesian Chief*, though, the crowds in Dublin are largely female, and the effect they have is to rob Connal of any form of agency. Connal finds himself "involuntarily drawn into the theatre" (III 192). Once the performance ends "he was borne again by the crowd" (III 199). Once he decides to leave Dublin, he is "determined that nothing should delay his progress" (III 215), yet immediately he is "assailed" by the prostitutes, and his determination is frustrated. In *The Wild Irish Girl* and, to a lesser extent, *Corinne*, where crowds were encountered they were inevitably in thrall to the woman of genius. In those texts, the main characters' heightened sensibility set them apart from the crowd. Yet the crowd respected them, according them a respect that was mirrored in the general importance granted them by the works they appear in. In the scene in which Glorvina is most clearly associated with Marie Antoinette, she is "in the midst of [a crowd], receiving that adoration which the admiring gaze of some, and the adulatory exclamations of others, offered to her virtues and her charms" (188). In *Corinne*, as Corinne approaches nearer the Capitol, "the more the crowd admired her" (23). In *The Milesian Chief*, that same form of heightened sensibility leads to both Armida and Connal being borne along by crowds. Admiration is replaced by an annihilating dissolution of

the individual agency of the heroic individual. In effect, cultural consumption now is granted a greater agency, a greater determinative effect, than cultural production.

It is interesting, though, that in Connal's interactions with the crowds in Dublin, it is precisely this residual chivalric sentiment that prevents him from forcing his way out of the crowd. Emmet's rebellion was marked as particularly notorious due to the murder of Lord Kilwarden in the rebel crowd. Subsequent histories of Emmet's rebellion emphasised the extent to which it had descended into a riotous crowd on the rampage. Interestingly, though, while Kilwarden and his nephew were piked, his daughter, Elizabeth Wolfe was spared, due, as some commentators suggested, to the chivalric nature of the rebels. Thus, a 1904 history of the insurrection gave this reading of Elizabeth Wolfe's ordeal:

> With the departure of Emmet, the rebellion had fallen into the hands of the offscourings of the lowest quarters in Dublin. But the Irish instinct of respect for women was alive even in the breasts of this rabble...'Run away with you, miss, and God save you !' cried the insurgents to Miss Wolfe – after they had foully murdered her aged father before her eyes. (MacDonagh, Michael : 293)

Immediately after the insurrection, however, a Castle supporter evidently suggested that she owed her safety to the "gallantry of some of the rebel chiefs" (quoted in O'Donnell : 92). Either way, the behaviour of the crowd seemed to indicate that despite the perceived savagery of the rebels, there was some vestige of chivalric codes of proper conduct towards women present. In the first crowd scene in *The Milesian Chief* in particular, the gallantry of the rebel chief is shown by his protection of a 'well-dressed lady' from the depredations of the crowd.

However, elsewhere in his references to Emmet's insurrection there is no indication that Maturin sees the rebellious crowd as containing some sort of primeval dignity and chivalric code. Instead, he repeats some of the imagery that Musgrave used to present the crowd as bloodthirsty and annihilating. As noted, in *The Wild Irish Boy* the rebellion was used to indicate the failure of the Act of Union to bring about internal security. In *Melmoth the Wanderer* Maturin uses memories of the insurrection, and of the assassination of Dr. William Hamilton in March 1797 by a group of fifty United Irishmen (MacSuibhne: 267-68), to present a violent crowd in Madrid in which "one spirit now seemed to animate the whole multitude" (255). Melding this two incidents to present a crowd that leaves its victim in "a bloody formless mass" (256). The murder of Lord Kilwarden is referred to as being conducted in "the most horrid manner" (257). It is an event that is simply not amenable to romanticisation, being for Maturin a brutal and bloody outrage, even more terrifying for occurring in the centre of Dublin.[18]

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[18] *Melmoth* contains a profoundly misanthropic speech by the main character (which Maturin dissociates himself from in a footnote) containing a denunciation of eighteenth-century patriotism:

> Thus a wretch whom want, idleness, or intemperance, drives to this reckless and heart-withering business [i.e. war], - who leaves his wife and children to the mercy of strangers, or to famish, (terms near synonymous), the moment he has assumed the blushing badge that privileges massacre, becomes, in the imagination of this intoxicated people, the defender of his country, entitled to her gratitude and to her praise. The idle stripling, who hates the cultivation of intellect, and despises the meanness of occupation, feels, perhaps, a taste for arraying his person in colours as gaudy as the parrot's or peacock's; and this effeminate propensity is baptised by prostituted name of the love of glory – and this complication of motives borrowed from vanity and vice, from the fear of distress, the wantonness of idleness, and the appetite for mischief, finds one convenient and sheltering appellation in the single sound – patriotism. And those beings who never knew one generous impulse, one independent feeling, ignorant either the principles or the justice of the cause for which they contend, and wholly uninterested in the result, except so far as it involves the concerns of their own vanity, cupidity, and avarice, are, while living, hailed by the infatuated world as its benefactors, and when dead, canonised as its martyrs. He died in his country's cause, is the epitaph inscribed by the rash hand of indiscriminating eulogy on the grave of ten thousand, who

The presentation of the two different crowds in Dublin is full, therefore, of ambiguous meanings. What we seem to have is a conflict between modernity and tradition, yet the multiple allusions to texts like Macpherson's Ossian or Moore's Irish Melodies had already prefigured that conflict. The entanglement with the crowd points to Connal's own outdated sensibility, a sensibility that is defined by his natural appreciation of Madame Catalani's performance and also by his philanthropic treatment of Mary. Both of these crowds of females, however, are in their own way revolutionary, as they perform what Burke had seen as the defining quality of the revolutionary episteme – the stripping away of the romance of aristocratic idealism. They operate in a similar manner, then, to Brennan, who stripped away Armida and saw her primarily in erotic terms, and was the instigator of the rebel army's abandonment of "that spirit of humanity and honour" that Connal had tried to inculcate in it. The first Dublin crowd locates cultural production within the public performance of the theatre rather than a putatively 'natural' moment in the west of Ireland. The second crowd is composed of prostitutes; an image of femininity completely divested of nobility, grace, and beauty and returned to a predatory world of commoditized sexuality. The prostitutes are an extreme form of Randall

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> had ten thousand different motives for their choice and their fate, - who might have lived be their country's enemies if they had not *happened* to fall in her defence, - and whose love of their country, if fairly analysed, was, under its various forms of vanity, restlessness, the love of tumult, or the love show – purely love of themselves. There let them rest – nothing by the wisd to disabuse their idolaters, who prompt the sacrifice, and then applaud the victim they have made, could have tempted me to dwell thus long on beings as mischievous in their lives, as they are insignificant in their death. (305)

Maturin, in this passage, refers back to the type of patriotism that Mortimer's father had celebrated in the opening paragraph of *The Wild Irish Girl*. It is more striking if read in conjunction with Benedict Anderson's dictum: "No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers" (9). Notice

O'Morven's lack of dignity, being the ultimate example of commoditized people. Both crowds, however, are linked in that they firstly are composed primarily of women, and secondly, they challenge the agency of Connal. The representative of a rebellious Gaelic primeval culture, albeit a rebellion that he almost immediately renounces, is denied agency in Dublin crowds and rebel mobs that he cannot control.

Conclusion

All of the characters in the novel that display some form of heightened, performative sensibility will die. As already noted, the only position left open to sensibility at the end of the novel is in the nostalgic form of sentimental memorialising that Rosine indulges in by the graves of Connal and Armida. However, even this form of sensibility will be problematised in Maturin's next novel, *Women, or Pour et Contre*, which has a much more overt relationship with De Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* than his earlier novels. Before I go on to examine *Women*, though, I would like to turn my attention to an review of Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington* and *Ormond* that Maturin published in 1817, in which he gives an idiosyncratic 'history' of the novel.

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that Maturin uses the words 'intoxicated' and 'infatuated', words he uses throughout his

Constructing a history of the novel: Maturin's essay on 'Novel-writing'

Before looking at *Women*, I want to argue that it is important to examine an essay that Maturin wrote in 1817 for the *London Magazine*. Ostensibly a review of Edgeworth's *Harrington* and *Ormond*, the essay in fact is mostly preoccupied with giving a potted history of the novel and its relationship to romance and sensibility. As has already been noted, Maturin, composing *Women* at this time, was concerned with the idea of vraisemblance, that still rather recently borrowed word used to describe a particular form of narrative technique. As such, the labelling of the essay as 'Novel-writing' is indicative of Maturin's concept of the particular semantic changes that the term 'novel' was undergoing in the period, with the increasing emphasis on the notion of vraisemblance that the novel conveyed. The subject of novel writing is one that "has assumed a character of importance that forces itself alike on the notice of the critic and the philosopher" (51).

In his prioritising of the historical importance of fiction in delineating the manners of the age in which it was produced, Maturin echoes the influential account of the importance of fictional narratives that had been provided by John Dunlop, in *The History of Fiction*, published in 1814. Fiction becomes an adjunct, perhaps even a more accurate alternative, to history. Maturin acknowledges this early on in the review:

> It is the detail we require; and in the detail history can seldom gratify us. Here biography, and even fictitious biography...becomes a useful supplement to history: it supplies us with those shades of manners, without which

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novels particularly concerning patriotism and romantic nationalism.

> historical painting becomes lifeless, undiversified, and uninteresting. (38)

This view is found in Dunlop's work, where fiction becomes, if anything, even more reliable than objective historiography:

> By contemplating the fables of a people, we have a successive delineation of their prevalent modes of thinking, a picture of their feelings and tastes and habits. In this respect prose fiction appears to possess advantages considerably superior either to history or poetry. (I ix)

Dunlop goes on to assert that history disregards individuality:

> "History treats of man, as it were, in the mass, and the individuals whom it paints are regarded merely, or principally, in a public light, without taking into consideration, their private feelings, tastes, or habits." (I x)

For both Maturin and Dunlop, then, the dividing line between history and fiction is the line between a lifeless attempt at objectivity, and a more interesting attempt at an analysis of the individual subjective consciousness (Maturin's "fictitious biography"). Fiction gives a more rounded picture of life as it deals with interiority, individuality, and the actual manners of the age in which it is written. If history belongs to the public sphere of intersubjective communication, fiction belongs to the private sphere, the sphere of individual subjectivity.

The extent to which fiction is an accurate portrait of the age becomes a problem for Dunlop, however, when he comes to write about the modern English novel:

> In former periods, when readers where few, and when only one species of fiction appeared at time, it was easy to judge what were the circumstances which gave birth to it, and to which it gave birth in turn. But in latter times, not only an infinite number of works, but works of different kinds, have sprung up at once; and thus they are no longer expressive of

> the taste and feelings of the period of their composition. (III 362)

The ability of modern fiction to represent (and create) its age is weakened by the explosion in printing and the splitting off into different, competing genres and styles. Hence the taxonomic enthusiasm of Dunlop, as he separates fiction from "the middle of the eighteenth century" into the categories of "the serious, the comic and the romantic" (III 372).

The need to create a taxonomy of fictional forms becomes, for Dunlop, a means of restating, though in a different manner, the representative role of fictional narrative. There is a quantitative change in the idea of mimesis. Apart from the implicit hierarchy that is presented in his breaking down of the novel into the serious, the comic, and the romantic, the novel now becomes more concerned with the study and description of individual consciousness rather than general manners. The "chief merit" of Richardson, Dunlop's prime example of the 'serious' mode, lies in "his delineation of character" (III 374). There might be a problem for Dunlop here, though. All through his discussion of Richardson, he insists on the didactic role of the fiction. Clarissa is not simply a character but a "model of female perfection" (III 374). The novels are avowedly the work of an author with a plan and intent behind them. Dunlop is therefore engaging in what had become the paradigmatic approach to the text, placing the author before the text. As Clifford Siskin, following on from Foucault, points out:

> The periodical... established a practice that proved crucial to the formation of modern literary institutions: *Author* 'before' *work*. We engage the latter *through* the former. (162 Italics in original)

Dunlop was not creating a cult of the author, but was working within a critical formulation that had already stressed the primacy of the author in the interpretative act. The intention of the author behind the work therefore becomes a vitally important consideration when looking at the work. Whether it is this sense of intentionality, and the importance it places on the individual author, that separates modern fictions from older forms, or the expansion of the market and multiplication of generic categories that have led to fictions being less representative of their age is left unanswered by Dunlop. The author-function, however, can be seen as linking these two issues. To refer again back to Siskin:

> [The] Author performs the function of labor, producing actual commodities – in this case, books. On the other, he or she performs the function of capital, facilitating the appropriation of surplus value by relocating it ideologically within the individual. (163)

The author thus becomes a category himself. The individual author becomes a means of attributing worth on to the text, rather than merely the text attributing worth to the individual.

What is interesting about Maturin's analysis of the romances from which the modern novel is an offshoot is the level of 'realism' that he assigns them. As Maturin says in the review "we are indebted (to chivalric romances) for a knowledge we must otherwise have wanted – the knowledge of the manners of the times"(38). The sincerity of this remark is undercut, however, by Maturin's insistence that in pre-modern society "life was…very monotonous" (38). The heroes and heroines, the "Orianas and Polinardas, the Amadis and Galaors" (38) have a "moral sensibility as obtuse as their intellectual; it being a settled thing…that their heroines all become mothers

before they are wives" (39). Chivalric romances, therefore, are realistic but represent a realism at odds with the bourgeois morality that was becoming central to the novelistic conception of realism. As such, their lack of a domestic ideology, and the problematic presence of a female sexuality outside of marriage, separates them from the realistic novel. In *Corinne* and in *Women*, the woman of genius and sensibility, descendent of "the lady (who) solaces the pangs of her absence by the tones of her lute", will be ostracised by a society that is antipathetic to displays of romantic sensibility. Zaira and Corinne both represent a cultural, intellectual, and sentimental superiority that marks them as outside of society's idea of proper feminine conduct. Not only sexually unconventional, but culturally and intellectually as well, they are isolated from a society that places female domesticity at a foundational level. As Madame St. Maur writes in *Women*:

> You are a genius, Zaira; and genius, (which I venerate from my soul, and think superior to every thing under heaven, except common sense) makes a woman a charming mistress, but the devil of a wife. (III, 13)

Of course, this had been one of the central problems in *Corinne*:

> Will (Oswald) find any woman with more intelligence, more feeling, and more affection than I have? No, he will find less and he will be satisfied. He will live in harmony with society. (357)

In order for Oswald to live in harmony with society, the woman of genius who is outside the accepted domesticity on which that society rests must be rejected in favour of a woman whose position within the patriarchal modern society is more settled and assured. Domesticity rather than aesthetic sensibility is the most important criterion for judging the moral worth of a

woman. When Zaira is introduced to Dublin society it is with the intention, according to the lady of society, Lady Longwood, to domesticate her:

> "You won't forget us tomorrow evening – Madame Dalmatiani has promised us her delightful society – We intend to quite domesticate her with us during her engagement – A few literary friends – Just what she likes – She hates large parties – So do Honoria and Caroline – indeed, quite domestic." (I 171-172)

Of course, the above quote is quite ironic and played to comic effect by Maturin. However, the failure of the Longwoods to 'domesticate' Zaira, and the fact that the novel ends with Honoria and Caroline being the only characters who marry (i.e. become domesticated) points to the fact that domesticity rather than aesthetic genius is the most important quality a woman can possess within this society.

So in Maturin's review, it is not that fiction has developed a more sophisticated approach to representing manners, but that the manners represented have become more sophisticated. As such, Maturin changes the development of fiction away from the author, the individual creator of the aesthetic object, to the audience. The English novelists that "are by courtesy called Classical" (40), that is, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, are denigrated as being unsuitable for modern ears. Maturin's verdict on *Clarissa* is much more critical than Dunlop's:

> *Clarissa* is less objectionable [than *Pamela*], though many of the scenes at Mrs. Sinclair's are such as are wholly unfit for modern ears, however the consciousness of superior sanctity might assist those of our ancestors in sustaining them. (40-41)

Even though Maturin labels the works of these three authors as morally suspect, he acknowledges that their status has been established and "public opinion has long been formed" (40). However much Maturin may be wrong

in his assessment of the three writers, he does begin to move attention from the individual novelist, working to his own specific artistic and moral agenda, to a literary field in which 'public opinion' plays an important role. His acknowledgement of the motives of the writers is a cynical development of this shift in emphasis:

> Those writers might possibly have thought they were serving the interests of morality; but it is much more probable that they wrote from the mingled motives that influence most writers, - from love of fame, the hope of profit, or the vacuity of idleness, to exhaust imagination, diversify leisure, or dissipate anxiety. (40)

Any suggestion, therefore, that the 'Classical' novelists are serving some higher ethical or aesthetic purpose is dismissed. The shift in terms is also deliberate. Richardson, Fielding and Smollett are no longer 'novelists'; they are simply 'writers'. As such, they belong not to the aesthetic realm, the field of literary and cultural production, but to the mere practice of producing texts, the world of print media in all its forms.

Maturin in the review downplays the individual agency of the famous male authors of the eighteenth century. They are Classical by public opinion, their works are dated, and they share the same debased motives as all writers. In his fiction, on the other hand, he displays a profound concern with how genius becomes alienated from society and robbed of political agency. At least, that would be the case if he had left his history of novel writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, the historical juncture at which Dunlop breaks off from serious analysis, and which many modern 'rise' narratives similarly conclude with.[19] Maturin, however, shared in the

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[19] The most obvious example would be Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957, London: Pimlico, 2000). See also Michael McKeon *The*

taxonomic enthusiasm of his age, and he goes on to speak of three genres; the sentimental novel, the gothic, and the novel of society (the school of fiction initiated and exemplified by Surr's *A Winter in London*). If these three genres are to some extent criticised by Maturin as being especially formulaic and dictated by audience demands, it is important to remember that he saw his own fiction, and much of the 'national' fiction of his contemporaries, as being profoundly implicated with them.

Given the level to which Maturin will move from one generic convention to another within his own fiction, it seems somewhat disingenuous for him to pretend to be confused at the turn from sentimental fiction to gothic fiction:

> The transition from the vapid sentimentality of the novel of fifty years ago to the goblin horrors of the last twenty is so strong and sudden that it almost puzzles us to find a connecting link. The contrast between heroines who, extended on silken sofas are courted by prostrate peers kneeling on Brussels carpets, and heroines, who, immured in haunted towers are menaced by ruthless and mysterious barons not with love, but with murder..." (46)

The puzzlement of the 'connecting link' is immediately answered. For all their conventional dissimilarities, the sentimental novel and the gothic centre on the heroine, and differ merely quantitatively in the degree of danger that they come under. Feminine psychology, feminine experience, and, crucially, feminine sensibility are central to the novel. "The history of the novel" becomes "the history of the female mind" (47). Maturin brings us up to his present day, when the novel not only has the female mind as its subject, but also is authored, in his review's terms, exclusively by women:

Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press,

> This age and this age alone may boast of writings, which under the denomination of novels afford rational representations of life, and just delineations of the heart, combined with useful and practical rules of conduct...we may advert to the productions of Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. West, Mrs. Opie, Miss Hamilton, Miss Porter, and Miss Edgeworth – though we are far from denying that these have all their several characteristic defects, most of their absurdities, and some of their mischiefs. (51)

The praise for these writers, highly qualified as it already is in the above extract, is further qualified when we remember the insistence with which Maturin presented, not only in this review but also throughout his career, as merely a part of a larger system of exchanges. The author was not an isolated figure, a genius of Corinne-like cultural sensibility, but someone who was deeply involved in the literary marketplace. It is important when we read Maturin's praise for his female contemporaries to keep in mind the extent to which his female characters, nearly all of whom are Corinne/Glorvina-like figures in their role as producers and performers of powerful cultural and aesthetic positions, are implicated in and/or sidelined by a commercial modernity. In *Women*, as the title suggests, this becomes a vital consideration, as the idea of the place of female genius in the modern world, and by extension the place of aesthetic sensibility, becomes central. Maturin's review, which bizarrely fails to mention the pre-eminent author of the day, the self-consciously 'masculine' Author of Waverley, and downgrades the 'Classical' male writers who were in the very process of being canonised as 'fathers' of the novel, presents the novel as essentially feminine.

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The unusual revisionism of the review is worth pausing over. If the review pointed out the anachronism inherent in Radcliffean romances, passed over the eighteenth century giants of the novel in favour of contemporary women writers, and organised fiction into disingenuously separated genres of gothic, sentimental, and fashionable scandals, *Women* to some extent complicated all of those factors. It is a novel in which feminine sensibility is obviously central, increasingly marginalised within a modern society, and in which elements of all three genres clash, enter into dialogue and ultimately undermine each other.

The Trouble with *Women*: Sensibility, gender and agency

Women, or Pour et Contre begins in November 1813, and, as I will argue, the novel deliberately places its action over the course of the first defeat of Napoleon and the restitution of the European monarchies. The novel starts with the orphan, Charles De Courcy, making his way to Dublin. En route, he rescues a young lady from an insane old woman in Phoenix Park. The young lady is Eva Wentworth, niece to a strictly Evangelical Methodist. Charles falls in love with Eva, but her reserve and the religious narrowness and sectarianism of the Methodist household eventually cool his ardour. He becomes smitten by Zaira Dalmatiani, a mysterious Corinne-like figure, and, rejecting Eva, moves with her to France as part of a planned tour of Europe. While involved with the intrigues of French salon society, Charles learns that Eva is dying. He abandons Zaira in order to return to Ireland and, having learned of Eva's death, wastes away himself. Zaira follows him back to Ireland, only to learn from the old woman that Eva was her daughter, as Zaira herself is the daughter of the old woman. The novel ends with an emotionally and intellectually broken Zaira, living out her miserable days in Ireland, unable to perform or use her talents.

If we attempt to outline a comparison between *Corinne* and *Women*, we notice that the character in *Women* who is most ostensibly based on Corinne survives, while the analogous characters to Oswald and Lucile die a Corinne-like death. Is this a simple reversal of *Corinne*'s theme of the woman of genius being sidelined by a domesticity that is anathema to her? The answer must be no. When we consider Charles and Eva we have to

recognise the extent to which they themselves represent a sensibility which we had seen in Corinne herself. Such a sensibility is completely erased at the end of *Women.*

Not only is De Courcy an orphan, but he will, unlike Oswald, fail to have any children. An upper class capable of the symbolic and cultural production of capital that we can see in Owenson's fiction is replaced by a merely economic middle-class that has no claim to any sort of aesthetic sentiment. For the Wentworths, proto-Philistines, any aesthetic or cultural claims become highly suspicious, until even their religion rejects heightened sensibility in favour of rigidly orthodox controversy. Religion in the novel will be presented as rigidly, barrenly, doctrinal. Sensibility, the general psycho-perceptual outlook that was inherent in the main characters of *Corinne* and *The Wild Irish Girl*, is constantly marginalised in *Women.* The novel will end with a penultimate scene of gross insensibility:

> The following spring, the Miss Longwoods, gay and happy, were escorted by youthful, titled bridegrooms into that very church. They entered it fluttering in bridal finery, and as they quitted it, their steps trod lightly on the graves of De Courcy and Eva. Such is the condition of life. (III 407)

This can be contrasted with the final scene in *The Milesian Chief*, where the reader was presented with Rosine indulging in a sentimental reverie over the grave of Connal. It is important to examine the way in which sensibility in Maturin's novel is gradually moved away from. Of course, relevant to this sidelining of sensibility is the issue of genre. Maturin presented *Women* as a realistic novel in contrast to his earlier works. In his preface, he attempts to present the style of *Women* as being something of a departure for him:

> When I look over those books [his earlier novels] now, I am not at all surprised at their failure; for [...] they seem to me to want *reality*, vraisemblance; the characters, situations, and language, are drawn merely from imagination.... In the Tale which I now offer to the public, perhaps there may be recognised some characters which experience will not disown. Some resemblance to common life may be traced in them. On this I rest for the most part the interest of the narrative. (I iv Emphasis in the original)

Maturin suggests that instead of 'romance' we will be presented with '*vraisemblance*', a term that has only recently come into use to describe a particular mode of realist narrative. In comparing *Women* with *Corinne* as texts which deal with the vexed relationship between aesthetic sensibility, national identity, and gender, a crucial factor to keep in mind is, as with his other fiction, the self-aware nature of Maturin's fiction. By this, I mean the evidence they give of being aware of their own complicity and position within a material economy of cultural goods. The idea of *vraisemblance* that Maturin introduces in his preface marks his intention to present a novel that he consciously distinguishes from his earlier fiction. Instead of romance, we are presented with a claim to realism. It is important to keep this before us as we examine the ways in which sensibility is gradually sidelined in the novel. In *The Wild Irish Boy* and *The Milesian Chief* heightened sensibility has been associated with a romantic world-view. Unlike *The Milesian Chief*, though, *Women* will not end with an apocalyptic description of cultural destruction followed by the passive remembrance of a sensitive reader. *Women* will instead have as its final image of the Corinne-like Zaira a presentation of a desolate and guilt-ridden figure:

> Zaira still lives, and lives in Ireland. A spell seems to bind her to the death-place of her daughter and lover. Her talents are gone, at least they are no longer exerted; the *oracles* may still be there, but it is only the tempest of grief that now

> scatters their leaves. Like Carathis in the vaults of Eblis, her hand is constantly pressed on her heart, in token of the fire that is burning there for ever; and those who are near her, constantly hear her repeat, "My child – I have murdered my child!" (III: 407-408 Italics in original)

The trajectory of public discourse outlined in *Corinne* from what Joan Landes has called the "iconic spectacularity of the Old Regime" (*Women and the Public Sphere*: 67) to a more textual and legalistic public sphere (embodied in the state trappings of the military review, news-sheets, and bourgeois theatre audience that Corinne encounters in England) occurs in *Women*, although with, if anything, a more pessimistic ending than De Staël's novel. In De Staël's novel there is the suggestion that Oswald and Lucile's daughter will at least 'inherit' from Corinne the sensibility which she 'inherited' from her mother, thus allowing in some form the continuation of a line of feminine cultural genius and heightened sensibility. For Corinne herself, the only refuge she has at the end of the novel is in religion, the only area where her sensibility can find an outlet, now that her ability to enact cultural spectacles has abandoned her. Her final song becomes a threnody about her previous investment of genius in merely earthly matters:

> "Oh God, you do not reject the tribute of talent; the homage of poetry is religious, and the wings of thought serve to bring us closer to you.
> There is nothing narrow, nothing servile, nothing restricted, in religion. It is the immense, the infinite, the eternal. Genius is far from being likely to turn from it. The imagination, right from its first flight, outstrips life's limits, and the sublime in every genre is a reflection of the divine." (401)

All Corinne's arts are finally subsumed within a religious sensibility which can contain them, and is in fact proposed as the actual repository of the aesthetic temperament. Therefore, while Corinne loses the performative

aspect of cultural production within a public (or more accurately, a national) sphere, her actual sensibility is not destroyed. Unlike Zaira, who ends *Women* repeating a single sentence that identifies her as an agent of *dis*-inheritance and destruction, Corinne at least allows herself some form of continuance. There is the suggestion in De Staël's novel that Oswald's child with Lucile will be a Corinne-like figure, thus re-inserting the possibility of a form of a displaced transmission of cultural sensibility. In *Women*, however, there is no such possibility. The matrilineal transmission of sensibility is not linked to an aesthetic sensibility but to tragedy.

The issue of religion, though, is one that must be looked into in far greater detail when we come to *Women.* For if in *Corinne* we have some suggestion that what I have been calling the aesthetic sensibility might have some refuge in religion, Maturin's work presents religion as enacting the same move away from feminine sensibility that occurs in the political sphere of the nation. Religion in *Women* becomes an aridly doctrinal affair, consisting in the mere clash of pamphlets, tracts, and other assorted texts. Central in illuminating this process is Maturin's presentation of Eva Wentworth. When *Women* came to be translated into French, the title was changed to *Eva, ou Amour et Religion.* While it is unclear how Maturin would have reacted to this re-titling of his novel, it is interesting as it forwards a reading that positions Eva's personality as the focus of the novel's concern. So, in *Women* we have a version of *Corinne* that might seem centre on the Lucile-figure. As has already been indicated, though, Eva is far from being a direct analogue to Lucile. In fact, the progressive alienation of her sensibility from the religion in which it is deployed mirrors

Corinne's estrangement from the nationalised public sphere that she had a formative role in creating. Her first appearance marks her as the type of sentimental and gothic heroine that Maturin had mocked in his review article, enduring adventures "in her clothes, which never require washing or mending" ('Novel-writing', 43):

> A wretched candle threw its dim light (too dim to be discovered before) on a pallet and a figure in white that lay extended on it. The spotless white of the drapery made a strange contrast to the darkness, filth, and misery around it. De Courcy approached; - it was a female; the face was averted, and one arm was flung wildly over the head, but ringlets of luxuriant dishevelled hair, that even in the darkness gleamed like gold, were scattered over the shoulder, descending almost to the slender waist, and half the pale cheek, lovely even in apparent death, was seen beneath it. (I 17-18)

Within the first few pages of the novel, therefore, Maturin directly contradicts his statement in the preface to the novel that in the scenes that will follow "some resemblance to common life may be traced" (I iv). Instead, we have a quintessentially gothic narrative complete with forced abduction, immaculate heroine, virtuous hero, and, in the person of the "frightful and almost supernatural" (I 15) old woman, a demonic adversary. Eva is therefore set up as the typical gothic heroine, yet the preface has insisted on the novel's 'vraisemblance'. What we can see, therefore, is an enactment of the novel's larger theme of the marginalisation of feminine sensibility on the generic level. The genres of sentimental fiction and gothic romance to which Maturin ascribed an almost exclusively feminine focus, are gradually replaced by a more (masculine) realism that focuses on a recognisable contemporaneity. Eva is a disruptive element within the novel as she invalidates the novel's claim to realism. As a further example of this

to the one already looked at, we might want to consider the scene from the second volume in which she appears before De Courcy on a trip to Bray as, literally, a wraith:

> As they descended the hill, De Courcy saw before him as plainly as ever he beheld an object in his life, the figure of a female in white at the foot of it, approaching rapidly, with a gliding motion; so rapidly, that, in a few moments, she passed him. Her dress was white, but not like any dress usually worn; her face, as she passed him, was pale, colourless, and corse-like; the eyes and lips were closed, but the features were those of Eva [....] Once again he saw it. It was while he was assisting Zaira into her carriage; it then appeared lying in the dust under his feet; so obviously under his feet, that he started away to avoid trampling on it. (II 67-68)

Why then, does Maturin place such a figure with such a particular generic resonance within a social background of evangelical Protestantism in the Dublin of 1814? It is, to return to the theme of religion, to further highlight a trend away from the presentation of feminine sensibility as the central agent within the social sphere. When Eva's place within the Methodist community is examined, it will be seen to again be a situation in which sensibility is battered down by outside (masculine) forces.

Maturin's use of Methodism as representative of evangelicalism in general was related to his concern about the issue of sensibility. Methodism was seen, and has been seen by commentators since, as being particularly connected to the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility. It was John Wesley himself who claimed that Methodism was a "religion of the heart" (quoted in Thompson: 402). Emotionalism was central to the Methodist experience of religion, allied to a strict asceticism when it came to actual matters of the flesh. Methodist services re-enacted the physical manifestations of sensibility:

> Adherence to both Methodism and the cult of sensibility was demonstrated by the capacity to feel and to signify feeling by the same physical signs – tears, groans, sighs, and tremblings. (Barker-Benfield: 268)

Along with this, however, was Methodism's obsession with forbidding sins of the flesh. While physicality may have been an element of Methodist worship, sexuality was taboo. As E. P. Thompson points out, "the obsessional Methodist concern with sexuality reveals itself in the perverted eroticism of Methodist imagery" (407). Church meetings demanded "in the open air the kind of response that sentimental literature wanted in the closet" (Todd: 23). Maturin refers to this similarity in his novel when De Courcy ponders the lyrics of evangelical hymns and their use of erotic language to describe religious sentiments:

> [He] was amazed how any one who decried human poetry as the idle sport of an intoxicated imagination, could apply, without hesitation, the warmest language of human passion (which do often occurs in the evangelical hymns) to the expression of human passion, and address the Deity in such lines as these:
>
> How tedious and tasteless the hours,
> When Jesus no longer I see;
> Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers,
> No longer have charms for me.
>
> [...] Such was the poetry to which ears and lips were accustomed that closed with horror against the efforts of imagination, or the aspirations of passion, or even the voice of music, unless combined with the language of an evangelical hymn. (I 131, 132-133)

Not only were Methodism and sensibility connected by outward similarities, though. Vitally, both were seen as particularly associated with femininity. Women were active in Methodism to an extent beyond that of most other religious sects. At both the organisational level and in its emphasis on the domestic space of the family as the primary social unit,

Methodism gave women a status and role which was not truly damaged until the early decades of the nineteenth-century. This is hinted at in Maturin's work, where we are told that Wentworth "by the persuasion of his wife...was induced to listen to the evangelical preachers." (I 51) At least in its initial evangelicalism in the eighteenth century, women were granted an agency that would be progressively downgraded throughout Maturin's lifetime. While his wife may convert Wentworth, Eva noticeably fails to persuade De Courcy to accept the tenets of the religion.

In fact, in the same period in which *Women* was published Methodism underwent its own form of masculinisation, with a general purgation of women preachers and removal of women from many aspects of organisational life. As the historian, David Hempton expresses it:

> In the break-up of old patterns and in the early stages of the forging of new ones, women were able to achieve a temporary position of influence in the early stages of the evangelical revival which was not sustained into the nineteenth century when male ministers, trustees, and administrators reimposed a substantial measure of control. (181)

This to is signalled to some extent in the novel in the character of Mrs Wentworth, who initially triggers her husband's conversion yet is presented as a woman who finds herself held back from her full potential by the constraints of her religion:

> [O]ne easily saw that the range of her mind was far more extensive than that of the objects to which it was confined. She herself appeared to feel this self-imposed constraint, and to escape from it from time to time, but soon returned again; and the final impression which she left was that of strong sense, rigid rectitude of principle and conduct, and a temper and heart naturally warm, but subdued by the power of religion. (I 49-50)

Here, female intellectual ability is constrained by the religion.

Maturin's attack on Methodism seems to be related to his belief that it is in danger of losing its 'femininity' and, therefore, its true spirit. The traditional ways in which women adopted a social role through religion, charity and education, are challenged in the novel. Eva's charity work and teaching are shown to elicit an ungrateful, demeaning response from their beneficiaries. If there is a concern in *Women* that religion is losing a feminine sensibility, it is a concern not confined to Maturin. There were other writers at the time that saw Calvinistic Methodism as being a mechanical jumble of theological arguments:

> See yonder preacher! to his People pass,
> Borne up and swell'd by Tabernacle-Gas;
> Much he discourses, and of various points,
> All unconnected, void of limbs and joints;
> He rails, persuades, explains, and moves the Will,
> By fierce bold Words, and strong mechanic Skill.
> (Crabbe: 62)[20]

Wentworth, like the preacher in Crabbe's poem, represents the Calvinistic strand in Methodism, with discourses on many aspects of theological controversy argued forth in a dry, mechanical way. In fact, Maturin in the novel can be seen as satirising Methodism as it is practised rather than Methodism as an ideal 'religion of the heart'.

Indeed, Maturin's novel and its non-Methodist characters often come close to embodying a religious sensibility that echoes Wesley's 'religion of the heart':

> It is certain, that when Nature is made the interpreter of Heaven, we listen to its oracles with a devotion that resembles instinct; and to see God in clouds, or hear him in the wind, to feel this *theology of the heart*, was not only congenial to De Courcy's imagination, but formed a

[20] According to Alaric Watts, George Crabbe, along with James Hogg, was one of Maturin's favourite poets ('Conversations': 406).

> delightful contrast to the gloom, the dogmatism, and the technical phraseology of a conventicle. (II 36. Italics in the original)

In his very rejection of the Wentworths' dry religion of the parlour, De Courcy's pantheism gives one of the closest echoes of one of Wesley's most famous statements of Methodism's basic principle. Maturin's italicisation of the phrase 'theology of the heart' highlights its centrality within the sentence. It is a statement, though, that will be central to the novel as a whole and it brings us back to the importance of Eva as the sentimental heroine of a narrative that will ultimately destroy her. Eva comes to represent a theology of the heart, although it will be important to stress later that this is a form of sensibility that rejects the physical and erotic possibilities that that phrase might also imply. As with Methodism in general, Eva is suffused with an erotic energy that is entirely displaced into a religious piety.

Eva comes to the reader, therefore, with all the accoutrements of a sentimental heroine but given an added religious dimension. It must be stressed though that she differs from a character such as Corinne or Zaira in that her excellence is not self-aware. In fact, she seems to be unable to conceive how a woman of genius might be accommodated within language, as her following comment on Zaira demonstrates:

> "She is very beautiful," said Eva [....] "And very clever – talented, accomplished I mean," said Eva, hardly knowing a term for intellectual eminence in women. (II 129)

Eva's 'eminence', therefore, does not display itself in intellectual or artistic achievement. If she has a heightened sensibility, it is within an idealised religious context. Therefore she excels at music, "[an] angel figure, as it

bent over the harp" (I 75), yet only plays devotional music. She has a library of three books that she brings to the garden in the evening; "the Bible, Young's Night Thoughts, and Blair's Grave." (III 145). The catalogue of clichés taken from sentimental literature could be exhaustively listed – it can certainly make reading the sections of novel that deal with Eva exhausting work for the modern reader. It can be argued, however, that the very exaggeration of Eva's sensibility is connected to the main theme that I want to look at in *Women*. Eva's representative status as a type of embodiment of an attempted de-sexualised sensibility is vital when we read Maturin's critique of the religious milieu out of which she emerges.

Maturin was cagey about the response that his novel would have in Methodist circles. In a letter dated 2nd August 1817, to Sir Walter Scott he wrote, "it will set the evangelical world in arms, if they read it" (Ratchford & McCarthy: 82). The final clause of the sentence is important, suggesting that the very people he criticises may not actually bother to read his novel. The Wentworth household is certainly one that is presented as being hostile to nearly any form of discussion that does not revolve around religious controversy. It is not a house that rejects books, but one which rejects any sort of aesthetic experience that is removed from strict religious practice. Eva easily stands out to De Courcy against such a background:

> The service concluded with a hymn, in which most of the company joined, some with science, but all with devotion. The harmony was good, for there were many voices; yet Charles could hear but one. Her angel figure, as it bent over the harp, - her slender white arms, - her clustering locks, thrown back by a motion of the head, so graceful, yet so infantine, - and her upcast eyes, as their pale-blue lustre broke from beneath the shade of her ringlets, might have made a poet or a painter think of a young Cecilia in her first moments

> of inspiration, but could make a lover only think of herself. (I 75)

Eva here is presented as being a work of art herself, someone who belongs to a literary or visual representation of music being played, yet simultaneously the object of the erotic gaze of the lover. She is in effect the aesthetic object, trapped in a static pose. This placing of Eva within a 'pure gaze' is a feature of the novel as a whole and further contrasts her with the social setting from against which she is painted. However, the conflict between the aesthetic and the erotic gaze (in so much as the gaze of the lover is placed within the syntax of the sentence in such a way that it displaces and cancels out the gaze of the poet/painter) might at least at some level be related to the method in which evangelicalism used the language of sentiment and sensibility yet cancelled out the idea of a 'pure' aesthetic response. The religious person, as Maturin points out, uses the language of the passions yet would abhor and repulse the actual erotic implications of that language. Casting Christ as the absent lover, for the Methodist, is merely a rhetorical means of setting forth a theological truth. If we erect three categories though, of the erotic, aesthetic, and religious, we can see how there are in the delineation of Eva and in other characters responses to her a constant intermingling of these areas. The problematic separation of the language of passion from 'actual' passion that can be seen in Methodist hymns might be replicated in aesthetic responses to images of women. Is there, for instance, some suggestion that the gaze of the poet/painter is already eroticising the young Cecilia, before the lover is even mentioned? This relationship between the poet and the lover revolves upon the question of what the woman represents. Does Cecilia represent poetic inspiration (the aesthetic) or the lover's object of

desire (the erotic)? It is a question that becomes fundamental to De Courcy's relationship with Zaira Dalmatiani. In fact, when De Courcy leaves Zaira her ensuing crisis of faith, a grotesque rewriting of Corinne's religious refuge, leads to a total collapse between the religious and the erotic, and Christ the spiritual lover is transmuted into Christ the physical lover:

> She called for the cross, and Madame St Maur, who, since the return of the Bourbons, had become *une tres bonne Catholique*, enquired for a crucifix among the servants. One was produced. "Hold it near me," cried Zaira; "let the blood drop on me; - one drop will purify my heart. They held it close to her, then she mistook the figure on the cross for that of De Courcy; - she kissed in that agony of devotion which love produces when mingled with the sentiments of religion. It was frightful to see her; - at one time she implored it to pray for her as the representative of Christ – at another she prayed to it as the image of De Courcy. (III 223-224)

Yet, before that relationship can be examined in more detail, the treatment of the Methodist Wentworth household in which this tension between the religious, aesthetic, and erotic occurs (and is sublimated) must be considered more fully. For if Eva is presented as the sentimental heroine who exists at some level on a static, aesthetic plain that is consistently eroded in the novel, we must examine the hostile presentation of the middle-class Wentworths who, after all, survive after their niece dies.

That setting emphasises the doctrinal and, it may be said, anti-aesthetic textual element of religion. It might be important to recall the subtitle that Maturin gave his novel at this point. Whereas De Staël placed two proper nouns in form of symbiotic relationship with her title *Corinne, or Italy*, Maturin has as his subtitle *Pour et Contre*. The idea of 'for and against', of two opposing voices in some form of debate or dialogue, picks

up on the underlying dialectical element of *Corinne* and places this as the guiding principle. The drawing room of the Wentworth's becomes the location of sectarian debates that Maturin presents as pointless and abhorrent:

> When Wentworth was announcing with triumph the happy evening he was to spend in company with a Socinian, a Catholic, an Arian, and an Arminian Methodist, who were assembled for the purpose of being exposed for the whole night to the battery of a dozen resolute Calvinists, De Courcy could not help asking, If he looked forward with pleasure to such an evening? while his own look and tone announced that he would have awaited it in horror.
> "Unquestionably," said Mr Wentworth – "Oh it will be a precious time – a time refreshing for the soul. – The enemies of the Lord shall then be found liars!"
> "And is it possible, sir, you can find pleasure in such a clash of creeds, tenets, and tempers? – Why, the Synod of Dordrecht itself will be a Quakers' meeting to such Babel."
> "*Without controversy,*" said Mr Wentworth, "*great is the mystery of godliness.*" (I 148-149. Emphasis in the original.)

Maturin appears here to be mocking Wentworth's excessive belief in the value of controversy in religious matters. Rather than being the spiritual refuge that Corinne found it to be, godliness is now a forum for 'battery', a place in which dialogue is replaced by harangue and controversy. It is arguable as to whether we can read this presentation of religion as being a dialogical area of conflict. If anything, it almost operates on a parodic level, recalling the sense of dialectical movement in national creation that we saw in *Corinne*, where national sentiment was the result of a dual nationality, yet undermining Corinne's performativity by emphasising Methodism's own progressive but resolutely non-creative aspect. This debate exists only for its own sake, a conversation that does not involve listening but preaching and counter-preaching. It is, in its own way, analogous to the non-creative iterative loop that we have seen Zaira finishing the novel in (looking back on

that quotation, we notice that Zaira is in a pose typical of eighteenth century female preachers, hand on heart and shouting to anyone who happens to be near her).

As well as this, however, the Wentworth's household meetings are implicitly contrasted with the salon culture that Zaira will come to exemplify and that had been seen in *Corinne*. It is at precisely at this moment in the text, when Wentworth propounds his idea of godliness that De Courcy learns of Zaira's arrival in Ireland. Thus, we move from a male dominated discussion in which men and women are segregated, and religious controversy is debated, to a less rigidly demarcated setting in which the female is a dominant figure, and talk centres on the fine arts. It is precisely against the breakdown of gender demarcation that Wentworth objects when he learns of De Courcy's intentions to see Zaira perform:

> "What is a theatre?" said he; "a place where the name of the Deity is never heard but in execration or blasphemy, where contrary to the commandment of the Lord [...] the women wear men's' garments, and the men the women's'..." (I 152-153)

Wentworth here objects to the theatre, as it is a place in which gender identities are not fixed and stable but contingent. Before this we have examined the theatre as a space in which national identities are 'performed', but Wentworth here points to the performative aspect of gender. We might want to consider what Judith Butler says on this:

> There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results. (*Gender Trouble*: 25)

So, for Wentworth, one of the important objections to the theatre is that it is a space in which identity is contingent and constructed. It is something, to

echo again Butler, something that is 'done' as opposed to something that 'is'. Wentworth associates this contingency with the theatre, the defining opposite of which, for him, is the domestic space, in which identity and gender categories are stable and fixed. For Wentworth, therefore, religion and the domestic space act in a similar way to the military review in *Corinne*, in that both act out an attempt to contain a potentially subversive gender instability verging on androgyny. We might want to remember that in Maturin's novel the hero is described as "almost feminine" (I 31). What we have to remember is that the cultural sensibility that is marginalised in Maturin's fiction is one that is always presented as antithetical to a domesticity that fixes gender identities within a patriarchal environment. This environment proves itself hostile to female agency in the cultural, social, and political spheres.

Within the Wentworth household, there is a much clearer power dynamic than in the cultural realm. As such, the Wentworths' prayer meetings enact a similar process of taking the forms of polite eighteenth century culture and removing the aesthetic and cultural role from them. The salon thus moves from being something "distinguished by its 'worldliness', its cosmopolitan character" (Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*: 25), to being a resort of Philistines. Its self-absorbed character shows itself clearly when De Courcy attempts to steer the conversation to contemporary events:

> [De Courcy] ventured a few observations on the position of the allied armies, then sufficiently interesting and critical, for *it was in the close of the eventful year* 1813.
> "Very true, sir," said the gentleman, with a contraction of countenance that appeared to De Courcy quite pantomimic, "very true; you are speaking of the downfall of the power of Buonaparte, but have you ever thought of the means of

> overthrowing the power of Satan, and extending the kingdom of Christ?" (I 57-58 Italics in the original)

World-historical events do not impinge in this environment. As a discourse, it might be structurally similar to the aesthetic in that it is removed from historical events. However, it belongs to domestic history, to the history of everyday life. It is realist insofar as the centre of attention becomes the middle-class living room as opposed to the foreign battlefield. While obviously poking fun at the small-mindedness of the evangelicals, on another level it recalls the moment in Walter Scott's *Waverley* when the eponymous hero realises that "the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced" (283). The real history commences, that is, just as Waverley leaves the rebellion, the world-historical event, and commences upon a more domestic life. When De Courcy himself goes to Paris, he begins to view a possible romantic past that his previous life in Dublin has denied him:

> Charles believed himself breathing empyreal air; he felt the military mania (though its force was now spent) in all its first intoxicating inspiration. What would he have given to have been crossing the Pyrenees with Wellington, or the Rhine with the allies! How contemptible his past existence appeared to him, whether passed in the conventicle with Eva, or in the boudoir with Zaira! – Equally contemptible. Europe had been won and lost, and he had not struck a blow for her safety, or her ruin! (III 18-19)

The Wentworth's house is, therefore, emblematic of the very domesticity that is hostile to both heroic achievement and female genius. It is similar in outward form perhaps to the salon of the eighteenth century, yet it radically downplays female agency. As such, the influential figure of Corinne or Zaira is transmuted into Mrs Wentworth, a woman of genius constrained by the setting she finds herself in. And as has been remarked beforehand, the

heightened sensibility of Eva is eventually airbrushed from the domestic picture.

The Wentworths' attitude to 'godliness' is far removed, therefore, from a religion of sensibility. Maturin conforms to a standard satiric presentation of Methodism as a form of Puritanism that rejects any form of secular aestheticism. One eighteenth century satire on Methodism, for instance, gave the following list of elements that made a 'true' Methodist:

> He must set out on *Foot*, with a *sanctified Countenance*, and high *Pretences to Piety*; which is to consist of *unscriptural Peculiarities, whimsical Strictness*, and *bitter Zeal against innocent and indifferent Things.* (quoted in Lyles: 158 Italics in original)

So inherent in Methodism was a dual nature with, on the one hand, a highly sentimentalised religiosity and on the other a strict asceticism in matters of a worldly nature. If Eva represents an exaggerated form of the religious sensibility, then Wentworth represents the 'pretence to piety' – a religious life characterised by a Puritan attitude to secular pleasures and a theology that has little or no place for 'the heart'. At one point in the novel, Maturin allows Zaira to fulminate against the aridity of a world under Calvinist Methodism:

> Literature; science; the arts; - all that agitates or embellishes life, - all that makes human existence superior to that of the beasts that perish, would be lost, confounded, trampled on. (II 148)

Again, the subtitle again becomes important here. Maturin seems to be weighing up Methodism as *both* sensual and Calvinist, as capable of extreme sensibility and also of extreme Puritanism. The treatment of Methodism therefore partakes of the novel's general sense of contradictions. What

occurs with Wentworth is that there is a refusal on his part to acknowledge the dialectical and performative nature of his own identity.

At this point, it is important to recall the Wentworths' social status as a suburban middle-class family. Their house on Dominick Street is a perfect example of middle-class piety with rooms "furnished plainly, but in a manner that shewed if luxuries were wanting, wealth certainly was not" (I 48). Far from being the itinerant preachers or rabble- rousers of eighteenth century satire, the Wentworths are an established family, Mr Wentworth having at a young age "made a large fortune with a spotless character, and...retired from business" (I 51). The material wealth of the Wentworths leads Maturin to make one of his more damning (at least in his eyes) comments on evangelicalism:

> There is, among the evangelical people [...] a determination to dispose of wealthy unmarried females to distinguished professors or preachers, who are not equally favoured by fortune, and the families of the former conceive themselves not only honoured, but benefited by the exchange. Thus the evangelical system is rapidly assuming the aspect of the papal, and, by the union of intellectual influence with actual wealth, bids fair to rival it in power as well as in pretensions. (I 62)

This is a class system that is based on the rejection of traditional class distinctions. With this in mind, it is important to bring to mind the character of Macowen. Macowen is, for Maturin, a truly nightmarish character. The "son of a poor labourer" (I 59), he is a convert from Catholicism. It is Macowen who steers the conversation away from the military campaigns of the allies, and the first description of him leads to Maturin's comparison of the evangelicals to the papists. Macowen is dangerous because he is a native Irishman who has learned how to access the social class where true

economic agency resides. He is similar to Randall O'Morven and Brennan in that he represents a threatening nativist revanchism that is based on an understanding of how modern social relations operate, rather than on a romantic Gaelic nationalism. His political threat, therefore, cannot be exoticised and neutralised. Just as Eva represents an aesthetic sensibility that has been desexualised, Macowen represents a sensuality that has nothing of the aesthetic in it to redeem itself:

> [F]rom the moment he beheld Eva, his feelings were what he could not describe, and would not account for even to himself, but what he was determined implicitly to follow. His system took part with his inclinations, and in a short time he believed it a duty to impress her with the conviction that her salvation must depend on her being united with him. When a perverted conscience is in league with the passions, their joint influence is irresistible. (I 61-62)

Macowen represents a hideous physicality that acts as a polar opposite to Eva. In his own way, he is the predatory villain to Eva's chaste heroine:

> His gloating eyes, frightfully distorted between their habitual up-turned fixture, and their leering obliquity of amorous squint, - his greasy perspiring hands, rubbed with uncouth restless awkwardness on the thread-bare polished knees of his black breeches, - his stubborn red hair, every capillary tube of which seemed alive in the present cause, - instinct with horrid significant existence, - his usual nasal, sonorous drawl, softened most reluctantly into an amorous whine,- his long muscular neck, *craning* out from his stiff, single, ill-coloured cravat, extended instinctively, and instinctively reddening to his jaws at the mention of a religious topic, and then declining with loathsome submission towards Eva, and extending its *spires* over her like a serpent over its prey. (II 131 Italics in original)

The language here is one of a base sexuality. Whereas we have seen Eva figured as the object of an aesthetic gaze that seeks to portray her as an emblem of inspiration, we have here words such as 'leering', 'squint', and 'gloating', all of which lead to the tumescent imagery of 'extending',

'craning', and 'serpent'. The repetition of 'amorous' and 'instinctive(ly)' further the presentation of this as a purely physical, bodily sensation, far removed rhetorically from the earlier scene in which Eva was compared to a poem/painting. This is a mechanised sexuality; a sexuality that exists purely at the physical level and is thus separated from the more idealised eroticism of the love between De Courcy and Eva. Maturin here uses language to reflect the "peculiarly repulsive" (II 130) form of sensuality that Macowen embodies. It is a sensuality that is also socially disturbing, as it has been revealed at an earlier point in the novel that Macowen's desire for Eva is at least partially motivated by his desire for the fortune that marriage with her would earn him. It is, therefore, a thoroughly perverted passion, as it is motivated by purely materialist concerns – the body of Eva representing for Macowen both a sexual object and a material acquisition.

We have come across characters like this in Maturin's work before, the sexual predator Brennan in *The Milesian Chief* being a perfect example. Sir Walter Scott was to find Macowen one of the more disturbing characters in *Women*, "a sensual hypocrite, whose disgusting attributes are something too forcibly described" ('Review of *Women*': 278). Macowen is the native Irishman who converts, but his conversion is both spiritual and material. He is Maturin's nightmare as he represents a peasantry that does not stay within a settled hierarchy. He is similar in type, though perhaps less ambiguous in motivations, to Jason Quirk in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, being the peasant who gains access to the reigns of social power through conversion into the dominant ideology. As knowledge of the legal system is the route Jason takes, religion is Macowen's method of enacting a

threatening social mobility. His entrance into college is an example of the Frankenstein-ian nature of his conversion, when the wife of a landlord tries to develop his oratorical skills:

> She proposed a subscription among her friends to enable him to enter the university, and be qualified "to minister at the altar".
> The subscription went on zealously, and young Macowen entered college; but when once there, *his views*, as they were called, expanded so rapidly, that no Church Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Independent, had the good fortune precisely to suit his sentiments in orthodoxy of system, or purity of discipline [....] In the mean time, it had been suggested to him that many evangelical females, of large fortune, would not be unwilling to share his fate. (I 60-61 Italics in original)

For Maturin, this represents a far more threatening social mobility than that exercised by Corinne or Zaira. While both of those characters earn huge material wealth through their artistic and cultural practices, they both at some level remain aristocratic, or at least figure as expressions of a form of cultural nobility. Macowen's movement from "the mud-walls of his native cabin" (I 60) to a position of influence within the bourgeois parlour, however, is without any cultural or aesthetic capital. Far from creating a space in which the nation can imagine itself, Macowen simply relies upon mimicry of the ruling class' religion as a means of gaining his own position of agency. It is a form of subversion that Maturin is incredibly concerned about as it furthers the erosion of an aristocratic romantic culture as an important element of the national space. Macowen is a purely negative character, and is finally compared to Cardonneau, the French atheist who initiates Zaira's crises of faith; "a wretch who had no more heart than creed – no more sensibility than principle...a Macowen under a different

disposition." (III 154) Both are characters who are devoid of those vitally important recurring words for Maturin; heart and sensibility.

Maturin very carefully sets his novel in the historical period when aristocracies where returning to Europe so that Ireland's position as a country that has had its aristocratic heritage removed becomes all the more clear. The dominance of a middle class morality, with the domestic sphere clearly established, is complete by the end of the novel. The novel is also very careful in its geographical spread. The two main locations are Ireland and France. Zaira and De Courcy leave Dublin to go on a grand tour with the intention of visiting Italy (II 1). The implication is that Zaira will give to De Courcy the same sentimental education that Corinne gave to Oswald. This, however, plainly does not happen. Instead, they never get beyond Paris, similar to Italy in its artistic riches but with the important qualification that the artistic riches are due to military acquisitions under Napoleon. Rather than being intimately fused with the locality, the riches of Paris are away from their 'natural' environment:

> Paris, in May 1814, was, what no one now need be told, the metropolis of all Europe; all mankind were hurrying there, and astonished to find themselves there. The plunder of all Europe; the wonders of antiquity; the *chef-d'oeuvres* of modern imitation; all that Herculaneum could be disembowelled of; all that could be gleaned from Thebais or Alexandria; all that could be swept away from modern palaces, from Milan to Moscow, from Berlin to Vienna; all the riches of that dreadful harvest, that had been reaped in blood from one end of the earth to the other, were accumulated there. (III 17)

Along with this cosmopolitan richness of culture, though, Paris is suffused with the aristocracies of nearly all of the allies and the Bourbons, to the extent that "one could not walk the streets without jostling against a

sovereign, a general, a hero" (III 18). The works of art are products of a pan-European aristocratic culture, looted by Napoleon and now on display in Paris. It is in this European context that Dublin is presented. England is only very briefly mentioned in the whole text, as a place that Zaira is required to visit due to her "affairs" (III 5), and is somewhere that the two lovers leave as soon as possible. Rather than being presented with a pastoral 'national' tale, we are presented with a novel that will present two very cities, one a metropolis, the other a barren provincial town. The above description of Paris could easily be contrasted with Zaira's famous description of Dublin as the skeleton of a vast behemoth, robbed of the aristocratic culture that had characterised (for Maturin) its eighteenth century heyday:

> "[Dublin's] beauty continues," said Zaira, "but it is the frightful lifeless beauty of a corse; and the magnificent architecture of its public buildings seems like the skeleton of some gigantic frame, which the inhabiting spirit has deserted; like the vast structure of the bones of the Behemoth, which has ceased to live for ages, and around whose remains modern gazers fearfully creep and stare." (III 295)

The central lack is of the social class that gives a cultural and historical legitimacy to national life. It is not that Dublin lacks crowds, it is that those crowds are no longer productive of cultural and symbolic capital. The ultimate symbol of this loss for Maturin is the conversion of the Parliament buildings into a bank:

> "I behold a building which would have embellished Athens in the purest days of its architectural pride – It was the Senate-house of Ireland – It is now *the Bank*; and along those steps, worthy of a temple of Minerva or of Jupiter, the inhabitants of this impoverished city, without trade and without wealth, are crawling to pay bills; and among those splendid passages which once echoed to the eloquence of a Flood, a Grattan, a Foster, and a Plunkett, is heard the jargon of runners and

> tellers; and in that splendid apartment of the House of Peers still hung with the triumphs of William, the directors meet to ascertain dividends, and strike a bonus. (III 296-297. Italics in the original.)

Instead of national culture, we are presented with the clearest examples of a soulless commercial modernity, with petty clerks replacing the roll-call of famous orators, and grubby directors contrasted with the historical 'glories' of William of Orange. It is a complete contrast to Paris where, importantly, Maturin suggests that the true wonders lie not in the accumulated artistic wealth but in the nobility who inhabit the city:

> [T]here were living wonders enough to satiate the eye, and fill the soul, had the streets been grass-grown, and the buildings hovels. (III 17-18)

This is an important statement, even more so if we consider the pictorial representations of Dublin that preceded and followed the Act of Union, which showed grass (or, in some cases, cabbages) growing in College Green, and buildings such as Trinity College or the Parliament buildings as ruins. It furthers the extent to which class is intimately bound up with cultural imaginings of the nation. The cultural exuberance of Paris is based not only on its actual cultural artefacts but also on the aristocratic classes that have now come to inhabit the city. Ireland, on the other hand, lacks that upper-class, and the novel cannot offer some idyllic Milesian chronotope on the western seaboard to make up for that.

It is important that these negative observations of Dublin come from the mouth of Zaira, and occur after she has learned of the death of De Courcy and Eva. At this point in the novel the heightened sensibility that we have seen in the novel has been removed and we are left with the aftermath – an arid modernity. Zaira's position in the text must be considered at this

point, however. As Scott pointed out, Zaira is the character most clearly modelled on Corinne, although he qualifies this, importantly, with the proviso that she is "Corinne in Ireland" ('Review of *Women*: 293). Within the novel, Maturin himself subtly separates Zaira from her model. So, for instance, whereas Corinne was celebrated for her skills as an improviser of poetry, Zaira dismisses improvisation "coldly" as "a talent that belongs only to native Italians" (I 217). So, while Zaira is a Corinne-figure, it is made clear that her intellectual and cultural eminence is significantly different to De Staël's character. Whereas Corinne's skills were resolutely non-textual, in that they were a particularly oral form of performance, Zaira's performances are much more firmly entrenched within an economy of cultural goods. Both women are rich due to their skills, but Zaira is more involved in the modern world. Perhaps as a sly reference to Corinne's reading of the newspaper in England and finding out about Oswald and Lucile, our first encounter with Zaira in *Women* occurs when De Courcy takes up a newspaper in the Wentworth's parlour.

Zaira's relationship with the world of, borrowing again from Benedict Anderson, print-capitalism, is far more fraught than this initial reading might suggest. Let us consider again the role that Corinne plays in the act of creating a national identity. Her performance at the Capitol in Rome is resolutely outside of the world of cultural commercialism, as it occurs in a public space and as part of a spontaneous public gathering. Her improvised portrait of Italy is exactly that, an improvised, spontaneous eruption of national sentiment. Zaira also performs a role in national self-definition, but in a way that is so modified from Corinne's performance as to

radically alter the place of feminine cultural genius. This occurs in the second volume, in a scene that so carefully counterpoints Zaira's performance with the print-media on the allied entrance to Paris that it is worth quoting at length:

> The allies were in Paris repaying the friendly visits they had received from Buonaparte at Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow. Nothing ever was like the tumult in Dublin that day, and many a following one.
> The statue of King William, in College Green, was placarded from top to bottom, the characters on the papers large enough to read from St Andrew's Church, or even from the Post-Office. As to the Post-Office, there was no getting near it, - news-hawkers and news-readers seemed to have a lease for ever of its steps. The whole population of Dublin appeared concentrated in College Green. Carriages stopping by dozens before the placards, - horsemen rising on tiptoe in their stirrups above the heads of the crowd, to read them, - and the crowd, wedged head to head, and foot to foot, planted by hundreds and by thousands, gazing, devouring with mouths, eyes, and ears all that could be heard, seen, or swallowed.
> Happy those who could read, and happy even those who could only get others to read to them, the grand talismanic words of – "Entrance of the Allies into Paris – Overthrow of the Buonaparte Dynasty – Restoration of the Bourbons" – all *exclusive intelligence* that day received. Then the shops where the papers were sold, - they could not have been more beset had the salvation of mankind depended on the working of the press. There were the hawkers flapping the damp reeking papers in every body's eyes, and getting them snatched out of their hands faster than they could disentangle their wet clinging sheets. The government papers, how they triumphed – as well they might. "Our wise and virtuous administration" – "our perseverance in a just and necessary war" – "its glorious termination" – "the sublime attitude of Great Britain, prescribing and controlling the destinies of all Europe." The opposition papers, - what had they to say now? [...] They muttered something about future fears and evils, and *hoped* all would be well; but who minded their mutterings or their hopes? *The Dublin Evening Post* itself was reduced to silence; the very paper which three days before had placarded the statue with the 'Defeat and Distraction of the Allies,' now was compelled to announce the success of the men they had abused [....]
> It was a pleasant sight to witness the strong expression of loyal rational joy that occurred in every street; men shook hands with each other; congratulations passed as eagerly, as if

> everyone had gained a lawsuit, or succeeded to a property. Military bands came thundering down the streets, all playing the 'Downfall of Paris.' There was a kind of national jubilee. (II 166-170 Italics in original)

It is in this state of national celebration that Zaira is asked to perform a specially arranged concert:

> [De Courcy] hurried back to Dublin, and was met by the intelligence that Madame Dalmatiani, who had declined so long appearing on the stage, was to appear that night in a short scene, and join in an *appropriate* chorus.
> Zaira had got from Pucitta a manuscript copy of the chorus he had composed for the occasion, 'Esulta Britannia, di Wellington Madre;' and bad as it was, (perhaps the worst he had ever composed, and not at all aided by the poetry), she had been importuned by peers to embellish this national fete by her talents. Her spirits were elated by the idea: to appear thus in the wake of kings and conquerors, hymning forth their victories, was congenial to her taste, and to her talents. (II 170-171. Italics in the original.)

We are told that Zaira is "an inveterate royalist" (II 171) but also, vitally, that part of her motivation is to impress De Courcy who, she correctly assumes, will be in the audience. Her performance is incredible:

> [Her] features flushed with the loftiest expression that can animate the human countenance; (the consciousness of becoming *an agent* in great events, by the power of sympathising with, or attesting them by the force of genius; [...] All imagined that her extraordinary exertions were *owing to the occasion.* (II 174. Italics in the original.)

There are a number of things that we must look at in this episode. In it we have a crystallisation of concerns about the place of women, aesthetics, agency, and sensibility within the public sphere of the nation. Whereas we have previously seen a mingling of erotic and religious sentiment with a language owing to aesthetic experience, here we have a mingling of erotic and national sentiment, and a concern about the place of cultural genius within a print-dominated public sphere of social interaction. For even

though Zaira performs brilliantly, we are left in doubt as to whether this can be compared to Corinne's performance at the Capitol. Both scenes are moments of national celebration, but in *Women* it is made clear that on purely aesthetic terms the poetry and music are actually quite bad. Both deal urban crowds, but in *Women* they are crowds who are activated by newspaper reports rather than the pageantry in *Corinne*. Vitally, Corinne's panegyric on Italy is motivated by some 'pure' patriotic sentiment, whereas Zaira is, to a great extent, motivated by love of De Courcy:

> The crowded theatre saw nothing but Zaira; Zaira, in the crowded theatre, saw nothing but De Courcy. (II 175)

The irony exists in the crowd believing she is motivated by the huge swelling of patriotic pride, whereas she is in fact motivated by love. Yet along with this, we have to consider the context in which this performance takes place. It is not performed within a public space that anticipates her arrival with a univocal expression of national pride. Nor does it occur in the regulated, classically inflected locale of the Capitol Hill in Rome. Instead, it takes place in a public sphere of clashing ideological views. The newspapers, it is made clear, are separated along party lines. The crowds are not regulated. This is a thoroughly modern public space, with a plurality of classes jostling within the urban thoroughfare. It is a world of disembodied newspaper headlines and newspaper jargon ("*exclusive intelligence*"- note that De Courcy learns of Zaira's performance when "he is met by the intelligence"), and the active exchange and selling of newspapers. It is even a situation that recognises that the media can be manipulated:

> [The news of the allied victory] was no stock-jobbing report; no bulletin fabricated in the cabinet of a minister, it was all stubborn, homely, undeniable fact. (II 165-166)

The crowd is vitally present here, not simply viewing but 'gazing', 'devouring'. And, once again, the crowd is one that is created by the demand for print media. It is highly significant that Maturin points out the way that the traditional symbol of Protestant civic pride, the statue of William of Orange, becomes 'placarded' with newspaper prints containing enlarged characters. In other words, the enlarged historical/national character becomes effaced, covered over, by an enlarged print. This is why it is important to stress the point that Maturin makes about the actual quality of the material Zaira works with. It is not important to her performance that it is of poor quality. Yet we can consider how radically our reading of *The Wild Irish Girl* or even *Corinne* would be altered if either of the authors told us that, say, the songs Glorvina sang were actually quite badly written, or that Corinne's improvised poetry was not really that good. In both of those novels the high aesthetic value of the works they perform must be stressed, as they are at least in some respect presented as points of origin in the development of a national self-image. In *Women*, the national self-image is already created as a result of a print economy. The place of the aesthetic, of the female genius, is already circumscribed. Zaira appears "in the wake" of the great statesmen of her time. She appears also in the wake of the newspaper reports, satisfying a demand for a performance that has been created by the "national jubilee". There is still a continuation of the idea of the femininity of the nation, signified by the title of the song that Zaira performs, in which Britannia is celebrated as being the mother(land) of Wellington. This image of femininity though, is the controlled one, the one that operates within the gender boundaries of the modern state.

To complicate matters further, we must recognise that this is the celebration of a modern state. To again contrast this with Corinne's performance in the Capitol makes us realise that whereas Corinne celebrates a nation that has no political existence; the crowds in *Women* celebrate a polity that has a political existence but not necessarily a cultural one. The victory of Ireland is not celebrated, nor is its culture. Instead, newspaper reports celebrate "Great Britain's" victory, and the song Zaira sings celebrates Wellington as a son of 'Britannia', as opposed to the son of his native Ireland. All of these celebrations, therefore, are counter to the national spirit that was expressed in novels like *The Wild Irish Girl* and *Corinne*.

Zaira, then, is not a national *genius loci* in the manner of Corinne or Glorvina. If anything, she is closer in spirit to the Paris of the novel, being rich in cultural capital and aristocratic trappings, yet aware that these are not actually 'natural' to her. Just as the above episode recounted a succession of newspaper headlines, Zaira's first performance is a "succession of scenes from the most distinguished Italian operas" (I 160). It resists, in other words, the organic unity of the initial performance of Corinne. It is much more firmly within a commercial repertoire than within a spontaneous, unifying genius. In fact, culture, genius, intellectual and emotional excellence, are all far more institutionalised in *Women* than they were in *Corinne*. This is party due to their enclosure within the market of print-capitalism. However, even at the very beginning of the novel we have an indication that *Women* will present a social and cultural scene that is far less

'natural' than in *Corinne* or Owenson's fictions. If we consider the first paragraph of the novel, for instance, with its introduction of De Courcy:

> Charles De Courcy, the orphan heir to a respectable property in the south of Ireland, after having received a more than usually good education, in the house of a clerical gentleman, who was also one of his guardians, entered the university of Dublin, in November 1813, when he was about seventeen years of age. (I 1)

The Oswald-character of Maturin's novel is very specifically part of an institutionalised form of cultural transmission. Whereas *Corinne* began by introducing a character that is embarking on a cultural exploration of Italy in order to alleviate the grief of losing a father, De Courcy is enrolling into a university. Oswald intends, and succeeds in, viewing cultural artefacts within their natural setting. The education of De Courcy, however, is within the framework of a modern state's educational system. The modern state and its subsidiary institutions, therefore, are in the position of regulating cultural transmission, and organising the modes of discourse through which culture is mediated and recognised. De Courcy, therefore, is embarking on a process of interpellation within the state, rather than a sentimental education under the purview of a woman of genius.

As noted though, he is literally sidetracked by the two representatives of female genius in the novel, and in dropping out of the modern system of education and social interaction, he effectively seals his doom. He becomes, in fact, something of a sentimental heroine himself, enduring the wasting sicknesses of love, having his features described as almost feminine, and finally dying a death similar in to Corinne's, if different in motivation. Scott noticed the "effeminate" nature of De Courcy, and ascribed lines to him from "the satirist of a countryman of De Courcy":

> A motley figure of the Fribble tribe,
> Which heart can scarce conceive or pen describe,
> Nor male nor female neither, and yet both,
> Of neuter gender, though of Irish growth,
> A six foot suckling, mincing in its gait,
> Affected, peevish, prim, and delicate. (290-91)

Just as it was pointed out that the French translation of *Women* was entitled *Eva* it must be noted that Maturin's original title for his novel was to be *De Courcy* – the title was changed when the publisher pointed out that there were too many novels with a similar title in print (Garside 'English Novel': 50). Ironically, the one character that most resembles Corinne, Zaira, seems to have nowhere featured in Maturin's plans for his novel's title.

This leaves us with the problem of identifying any sort of agency that resides outside of the various forms of (predominantly masculine) power that constitute modernity. The most obvious character to exist at one remove from the modern state is the madwoman; the mother of Zaira who remains unnamed throughout. It is left to consider how she functions within the novel, and what part she has to play. At one level, she is merely the nightmarish representation of an atavistic Catholic nationalism that constantly interrupts the social calm of the 'modern' characters, a primitive explosion into the polite world of salons, theatre and picturesque excursions to Killiney. On another level, however, she is active agent to a much greater level than either Eva or Zaira. Her power is not social, however, but enacted at the level of plot.

While Scott noted the debt owed by Maturin to De Staël's Corinne, he did not point out the obvious similarities between the madwoman and Meg Merrilies, the gypsy queen of his own *Guy Mannering* (1815). The similarity between the presentation and role of these two characters has been

briefly noted before (Fierobe: 287). In Scott's novel, Merrilies is a vital factor in propelling the romance plot towards its conclusion.[21] In the novel, the heir of the Ellangowan estate, Harry Bertram, kidnapped as a small child and brought up in ignorance of his true origins, returns to Scotland having served in the British army in India. Merrilies, who had displayed a considerable affection for the boy before he was abducted, remembers him, and proceeds to reveal to him his identity. The first view of Meg Merrilies confirms her position as an otherworldly character outside of a dominant discourse of scientific rationality and commercial modernity:

> She sate upon a broken corner-stone in the angle of a paved apartment, part of which she had swept clean to afford a smooth space for the evolutions of her spindle. A strong sunbeam, through a lofty and narrow window, fell upon her wild dress and features, and afforded her light for her occupation; the rest of the apartment was very gloomy. Equipt in a habit which mingled the national dress of the Scottish common people with something of an eastern costume she spun a thread, drawn from wool of three different colours, black, white, and grey, by assistance of those ancient implements of housewifery, now almost banished from the land, the distaff and spindle. As she spun, she sung what seemed to be a charm. (23)

Merrilies operates in the novel as "a prophet, Sibyl and Fate, the restorer of cultural memory" (Trumpener: 220). She plays an integral role in the restoration of the Harry Bertram to his estate, and thus helps enact the novel's "Tory-nostalgic ideology of feudal continuity in the face of economic and social upheaval" (Irvine: 111). Merrilies therefore operates to counter the dislocations of modernity (although as a gypsy she represents a

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[21] For commentary on Meg Merrilies that focuses on her role in plot development, see Ian Duncan *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992) 131-135, Robert Irvine *Enlightenment and Romance: Gender and Agency in Smollett and Scott* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000) 111-124, and Katie Trumpener *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1997) 219-222.

form of dislocation herself). Her blending of 'national dress' and 'Eastern costume' point towards her identification with both a national image of Scotland that acknowledges an imperial, exotic dimension as well. As Ian Duncan suggests, her power is "a prophetic and performative word-of-mouth: her curse and benison direct the loss and restoration of 'Ellangowan's right'" (131). Similarly to our other performative heroines, she dies at the end of the novel, once 'real history' has been allowed to commence.

The madwoman in *Women*, however, performs a plot of *dis*-inheritance. She is similarly introduced to us as a creature that exists outside of a rational, scientific world:

> [A] woman then started forward from a dark corner, and stood wildly before him, as if wishing to oppose him, she knew not how. She was a frightful and almost supernatural object; her figure was low, and she was evidently very old, but her muscular strength and activity were so great, that combined with the fantastic wildness of her motions, it gave them the appearance of the gambols of a hideous fairy. She was in rags, yet their arrangement had something of a picturesque effect. (I 15)

There is a similar contrast between light and darkness as in the scene which introduces Merrilies, but whereas in *Guy Mannering* the representative of some atavistic folk memory is shown in a fairly static tableau, with a sunbeam illuminating her from the darkness, Maturin's madwoman leaps from the darkness. And whereas the character who views Merrilies in the above scene does so through a small aperture, and thus remains removed from her notice, the scene in Maturin stages a violent confrontation. As with Merrilies, she invokes a curse that will determine the plot of the novel:

> [Y]et still she held his hand, and poring over it with a witchlike eagerness, exclaimed, as she examined its lines, -

> "Ay, ay, it is white and soft – white enough, yet there is black in every line of it to the eyes that can see it, the blackness that is blacker than death. It is as soft as a woman's, and yet it can deal a heavy blow – the blow that kills what it never touched – the blow that breaks the heart. Others are deadly to them they hate, but you will be deadly to them you love! – Take her, take her from me if you will, but take my curse with you [....] Now you bear her away like a corpse in your arms, and I see you following her corpse to the churchyard, and the white ribbons tying her shroud; her maiden name on her tomb-stone; no child to cry for her, and you that sent her to her grave wishing it was dug for you." (I 23-24)

The madwoman continues to pop up during the course of the narrative. Her representative status though, does not seem to be as clear as Merrilies might be. If, anything, she represents an image of subjectivity that is at odds with the modern community. She has a heightened individuality that is a grotesque extension of that of a Corinne or a Zaira. This becomes most apparent during one of the most dramatic set-pieces of the novel, the fire in the Dublin warehouses:

> She began her usual wild dance, regardless of the crowd, and of the terrible cause of their assembling, and mingled, from time to time, exclamations in a voice between recitative and singing, that seemed modulated to the music of invisible and infernal spirits. It was very singular of this woman, that though her accent was perfectly Irish, her expressions were not so; her individual feeling seemed to swallow up and overwhelm her nationality. Wherever she was, she seemed perfectly alone – alone alike amid the mountains of Wicklow or the multitudes of Dublin; all times, circumstances, and persons seemed to yield to the single mysterious, undefinable feeling that always governed and inspired her. (II 107-108)

Individual feeling here 'swallows up' nationality. This is interesting, as in *Corinne* we saw a character in which individual feeling brought forth nationality, in which heightened sensibility was fundamental to the expression of a cultural nationalism. Here, however, we seem to be presented with a negation of this. The madwoman appears 'perfectly Irish',

but that appearance is negated by her expressions. Her grotesque parody of a Corinne/Zaira, dancing and singing yet in such a way that demonises both arts, leads to a particularity that is adverse to the expression of nationality. Individuality, after all, is here presented as hostile to the national community, as "all other objects [were] of supreme contempt to her" (II 108). In her own way, therefore, she shares in Zaira's problematic relationship with the urban crowd, a relationship that re-writes the organic symbiosis between the crowd and the performer that we saw in the early stages of *Corinne*.

She does, however, determine the course of the novel. Her curse is brought to fruition, and it is she who reveals the true relationship between Zaira and Eva. Towards the end of the novel, as relationships and backgrounds are slowly revealed, she returns to the dark corner of a cabin similar to the one she had emerged from at the start of the novel:

> In a few minutes [Zaira's] attention was drawn to an obscure corner of the cabin by groans that issued from it at long intervals. It was so dark, that it was long before she discovered there what had been a bed, on which was stretched something squalid, haggard, spent, and moaning. (III 310)

The old woman is finally prevailed upon to reveal to Zaira the destiny of her child. She also rewrites the Wentworth family history, so that Mr Wentworth is an evangelical even before he meets his wife:

> 'Then the woman [Mrs. Wentworth], (I forget her name,) she married a *black presbyterian*, some of what they call the *new light*; but they have no light at all but the light of hell-fire, which that it may be on them for ever and ever.' (III 398 Emphasis in the original)

As a final comment on the Wentworths it is interesting, as it revises what we had known of their previous denominational loyalties (they had been

presented as Calvinistic Methodists) to now paint them as New Light Presbyterians. They belong to a religious grouping, that is, who where the result of a theological dispute as to the extent to which the state was to be permitted to have a voice in the organisation of the church hierarchy.

The figure of the old woman as repository of a form of knowledge outside of the dominant modern discourse of society (and history) will recur in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. In *Women*, the old woman is the character who can reveal the genealogy of disaster that leads to the final tragic image of Zaira at the grave of Eva and Charles. We are presented with three generations of women, all of whom represent different facets of heightened sensibility in religion, culture, society, and, finally, are all rendered obsolete within the generic conventions of the novel of 'vraisemblance'. Maturin had similarly presented different facets of Irish nationalism in *The Milesian Chief* using three generations of the same family. Just as that novel showed the potential for cultural nationalism to violently erupt in the modern state, *Women* shows the marginalisation of sensibility within the modern state. In *Women* Europe is shown as putting the clock back and attempting to revert to a pre-Revolutionary, pre-Napoleonic, and ultimately pre-modern state. Ireland, and Dublin, are left stranded on the shores of modernity. From being a locus of classical sensibility in his previous fiction, Ireland thus becomes the annulment of such a sensibility.

Maturin would go further in his next fiction. Just as *Women* presents a feminine aesthetic demolished by modernity, *Melmoth the Wanderer* would present the ahistorical aesthetic as the demonic flip side of the petty bourgeois world. In *Melmoth*, the driving ideologies of the modern world

come into full conflict with alternative forms of discourse. Anachronism becomes a central theme, as it had been to a lesser extent throughout his earlier fictions, and progress becomes mired in alternative forms of knowledge.

'Wonderful Savages': Historical narration, cultural capital, and orality in *Melmoth the Wanderer*

> [Though] the ancient Greeks and Romans were savages, (as Dr Johnson says all people who want a press must be, and he says truly), yet they were wonderful savages for their time, for they alone have left *traces of their taste for pleasure...*
>
> *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Italics in original)

Melmoth the Wanderer is easily Maturin's most well-known novel. It is a sprawling gothic novel, containing many tales within tales set in contrasting geographical and historical places. In this chapter I would like to forego attempting to summarise the complex plot and instead focus on a few particular scenes. These scenes, I will argue, help to illuminate in a particular manner how this novel deals with some of the issues of public agency and heightened sensibility that I have discussed in relation to his earlier novels.

1. The oral tradition as a source of historical memory

In one particular footnote to *Melmoth the Wanderer* Maturin comes closer than in any other part of his writings to presenting a model of historical narrative that seems to offer a resolution of historical traumas of Ireland. While describing an event in the Cromwellian wars in Ireland in which Cloghan Castle in County Laois is attacked, Maturin provides the following note:

> I have been an inmate in this castle for many months – it is still inhabited by the venerable descendant of that ancient family [the O'Moores]. His son is now High-Sheriff of the King's county. Half the castle was battered down by Oliver Cromwell's forces, and rebuilt in the reign of Charles the Second. The remains of the *castle* are a tower of about forty feet square, and five stories high, with a single spacious apartment on each floor, and a narrow staircase communicating with each, and reaching to the bartizan. A

> beautiful ash-plant, which I have often admired, is now displaying its foliage between the stones of the bartizan, - and how it got or grew there, heaven only knows. There it is, however; and it is better to see it there than to feel the discharge of hot water or molten lead from the apertures. (447)

In this footnote we have the voice of the antiquarian/local historian, providing a precise description of a local site of historical interest, and representing the current situation as being far removed from the historical trauma which can be now recollected in tranquillity. The personal testimony of the author is followed by precise architectural description. The O'Moores, who had been described in the main text as 'princes of Leix' resisting Cromwell's armies, are, in the footnote, presented as being reconciled to the state ('Leix' becomes 'King's County'). It ends with a description of an ash-plant, its beauty and foliage reinforcing the idea that we have moved beyond historical trauma into a more natural, organic social situation. While 'modernity' may be a dislocating rupture, a constantly changing and annihilating process, the description of the ash-plant seems to allow a means by which the modern social formation can reconcile itself to its past. The ruin thus allows the modern observer to see historical processes as amenable to an organic metaphor, leading to a stable modern society. It is a very Burkean settlement, recasting tradition as a plant, something central to how the modern state understands itself. The disruptive effects of 'history' are supplanted by a natural growth, and the footnote can be seen to be implicitly linking this with the present historical moment. In the way the footnote appears to present 'history' as something that has happened, and can now be imaginatively recuperated for aesthetic affect, it stands as an analogue to the portrait scene at the end of Scott's *Waverley*. In this scene

the historical rupture of the Jacobite rebellion is literally framed and contained as an aesthetic experience, something which no longer has any agency in the everyday world of modern social relations. The destruction of Cloghan castle is followed by its restoration, and it continues to play an important part in the social and legal structure of present day Laois.

The novel to which this footnote belongs, however, will provide no such sense of historical closure. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the historical experience is always present as a nightmarish experience from which there is no awakening. This is due in no small part to the modes of narrativising and thus remembering historical experience that are presented in the book. The settled tone of the footnote will be noticeably absent in the whole novel in which "[the] characters [...], the events, the outcome, and even the Wanderer are all ultimately unknowable" (Fowler: 532). In *Melmoth the Wanderer* we have presented not only a dialectical struggle between what might be termed modern (literary/factual) and traditional (oral/mythic) forms of historical recordation, but an investigation into the very process by which these terms are constructed and understood as both mutually antagonistic and simultaneously symbiotic.

Unfortunately, the concept of what constitutes an 'oral tradition' can be quite hard to pin down. As Penny Fielding writes;

> The oral is never simply one thing and what orality signifies in nineteenth-century writing cannot be understood without considering its uses as an agent in the creation and re-creation of cultural norms and values. The oral is always other: of writing (speech), of culture (the voice of nature), of the modern (a pre-modern past). (Fielding: 4)

The oral thus becomes more significant for what it stands against then for what it actually is. The idea of an oral tradition becomes a marker for

modernity, "an ever-moving point marking off our own present (whenever that might be) from a long past" (Fielding: 5). The term 'oral tradition' had been used as early as the first half of the seventeenth-century when it denoted all the practices of the Catholic Church that existed outside of Holy Writ.[22] Its modern sense comes from the late eighteenth-century when the distinction broadens to that between popular practices and secular (written) authoritative discourses. While the term retained some of its associations with Catholicism, it broadened out into a general descriptive term describing the method of transmission of practices and beliefs of the (predominantly rural) lower-classes. As George Denis Zimmerman points out (168), John Brand was one of the first writers to use it in his republication of Henry Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulgares* (1777) to describe the customs and beliefs of an illiterate rural populace. In his preface to the re-issue, Brand specifically sets the oral tradition against a more public authoritative written word:

> These [folk customs], consecrated to the Fancies of Men, by a Usage from Time immemorial, though erazed by public Authority from the *written Word*, were committed as a venerable Deposit to the keeping of *oral Tradition*. (Brand: iv. Emphasis in the original.)

While there is a residual linking of the oral tradition to popular religious practices Brand extends the remit of the phrase to include a whole set of cultural practices. The extent to which the term came to mean a general repository of cultural transmission can be seen in the use of it by Clara Reeve in her *The Progress of Romance* (1785). For Reeve, romance, "the polite literature of early ages," is found "in the breath of oral tradition"

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[22] The term had been used since the counter-Reformation to denote unwritten Catholic practices. See Nicholas Hudson *Writing and European Thought 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 188, n. 39. The OED lists a use of the term 'oral tradition' from as early as 1628.

(I: iii) in less civilised ages (as opposed to civilised nations in which "[romances] were of course committed to writing"). Whether Brand uses the term 'oral tradition' or 'popular antiquities', there is, as O'Giollain points out, a distancing of what is being described from the people who are describing it:

> All of the terms [to describe practices and beliefs] were based on distance between the observer and the observed – distance in time ('antiquities', 'survivals') or distance in social class ('folk', 'popular'). (32-33)

Brand's distinction between a written public authority and oral tradition is a useful starting-point from which to examine the question of oral culture and historical memory in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Brand's distinction carries with it the sense that the written, textual word has both a greater claim to public agency and yet is fundamentally unable to erase all forms of popular tradition from the national record. It neatly prefigures a public sphere that is resolutely textual, yet it also acknowledges that there are alternative forms of knowledge and cultural transmission outside that sphere. The oral tradition becomes a 'deposit', the equivalent of a national storehouse, for folk customs.

Yet while this seems to give some residual agency to the oral as repository of popular memory, the written word is the form in which these folk customs will eventually survive (namely, in Brand's reissue of Bourne's book). Folk culture goes through a sort of 'double authorisation', therefore. It is, on the one hand, consecrated through memory, becoming authoritative through its survival outside of the modern world of a public print-media. On the other hand, the only way in which it can be appreciated by the modern is to be recuperated from being merely 'a venerable Deposit'

through the means of the public authority of the written word. It is authorised, in other words, by being both outside print-media yet only knowable to a polite audience by the authority of print-media. Colin Graham's remarks about Yeats' *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) might prove useful in observing the relationship between the 'authentic' folktale and the 'authorising' medium in which it is presented to the public:

> Yeats's ambiguous control over the authenticity of his material reveals in its triple-level of authentication (tales, storytellers, folktale-collectors) that authenticity thrives on the textuality and substance of its medium – as suggested above it is the 'mass', not the media, which authenticity finds difficult. Textuality seems to provide the material existence which authenticity needs in tandem with its resistance to definition – its mystique is maintained and *evidenced*, while what is actually 'authentic' is filtered through further authenticating processes (folk tales are themselves authenticated democratically by their tellers, then approved and re-authorised by their collectors/editors). (Graham: 2001 Italics in original.)

The authenticity of folk customs therefore exists due to both its status as an alternative to print-media, and its subsequent absorption into and ultimate legitimisation by/of print-media. They provide an alternative form of knowledge yet that form of knowledge can only be activated and transmitted to a wider audience by means of the very form outside of which it is supposed to operate. The textual authority of the book is needed to reincorporate oral tradition into the national imagination as "at once a troublesome site of contested authenticity and a figure of national origin" (Fielding: 9). The oral tradition, then, is an alternative system of knowledge yet paradoxically it is always already contained as an object within the system that it is an alternative to. The vulgar practices of the common

people, recuperated by an enlightened form of ethnography "could be used to certify the specificity of a nation, and to justify the restoration of its rights if they seemed endangered" (Zimmermann: 168).

If, for the moment, we leave aside the political implications of the second part of Zimermann's statement, we can see a distinct role that the peasant culture plays within the modern social sphere. By the act of being published it confirms both an organic base for the national community, and in its appropriation by the very medium to which it is seen as a counter, i.e. print-media, it gives the nation a sense of its own modernity. These seemingly incongruous positions, organic tradition and commercial modernity, are, thus, only seemingly incongruous. The urge that leads to an ethnographic recuperation of peasant culture in effect credits that culture with its organic national connotations. The oral tradition, in other words, can be seen as not so much outside of a textual, public domain, as relying on that domain to grant it symbolic capital in the national sphere. As noted in the introduction, Bourdieu argued that the very thing that gives peasant rituals their symbolic capital is the way in which in ethnographical accounts they are presented as apart from a material economy of goods. An amorphous body of stories, songs, and practices can only become an 'oral tradition', that is, something somehow uncontaminated by a commercial modernity, through its definition in print. As Diarmuid Ó Giolláin writes on the relationship between folklore and nationalism:

> There was a liberating and validating dimension to the discovery of folklore, legitimising the traditions of a population that had usually been denigrated, giving them the status of culture, and allowing ordinary people to participate in the building of a nation. Folklore archives were ideologically informed, but represented the cultural

> production of the common people and formed a unique body of documentary evidence, which by their very existence offered an alternative to a view of history and culture as the work of 'great men'. (Ó Giolláin: 76)

When we come to examine how folk customs and orality appear in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, therefore, we need to examine not only how Maturin appropriates folk beliefs into his text, but also how he comments on the very process by which material from an oral tradition is presented within a textual artefact.

2. Print culture and public virtue: the difference between savages and barbarians

Before looking at the elements of Irish folklore which occur in the text, however, it is important to examine the whole concept of a 'folk culture'. The very term is an anachronism, yet the idea of a culture of the folk that has a validity of its own and exists outside of a print culture is important in the scheme of *Melmoth the Wanderer*. In one of the many interpolated narratives, Maturin has a character ponder the legacy of Roman and Moorish settlements on the Spanish landscape:

> The difference between the architecture of the Roman and Moorish ruins struck him. Among the former are the remains of a theatre, and something like a public place; the latter present only the remains of fortresses, embattled, castellated, and fortified from top to bottom, - not a loop-hole for pleasure to get in by, - the loop-holes were only for arrows; all denoted military power and despotic subjugation *a l'outrance*. The contrast might have pleased a philosopher, and he might have indulged in the reflection, that though the ancient Greeks and Romans were savages, (as Dr Johnson says all people who want a press must be, and he says truly), yet they were wonderful savages for their time, for they alone have left *traces of their taste for pleasure* in the countries they conquered, in their superb theatres, temples (which were also dedicated to pleasure one way of another), and baths,

> while other conquering bands of savages never left any thing behind them but traces of their rage for power. (29)

This is an essential passage and to understand its importance it is vital to examine it before we look at actual appropriations of elements of an Irish oral tradition in the novel. In order to do so, we must place this passage within two contexts. The first is in its relation to Dr Johnson's actual comments on the Greeks and Romans that Maturin (mis)quotes. The other context is that of 'ruin literature' of the Romantic period.

According to Boswell, on the 31st March 1772, he and Dr Johnson visited the gardens at Ranelagh and observed the newly opened Rotunda, modelled explicitly on the Roman Pantheon. While in the gardens Johnson met with Sir Adam Ferguson who "expressed some apprehension that the Pantheon would encourage luxury"(Boswell: 477). As an example of a people who had not been corrupted by luxury, Ferguson mentions the Greeks and Romans:

> "Sir Adam suggested, that luxury corrupts a people, and destroys the spirit of liberty (...). Sir Adam introduced the ancient Greeks and Romans. JOHNSON. 'Sir, the mass of both of them were barbarians. The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the newspapers.' Sir Adam mentioned the orators, poets, and artists of Greece. JOHNSON. 'Sir, I am talking of the mass of the people. We see even what the boasted Athenians were. The little effect which Demosthenes's orations had upon them, shews that they were barbarians.'" (477)

Once we have read this passage, we can begin to see a whole new set of relationships emerging in Maturin's use of it. Let us begin with a few paradoxes that emerge from the passage and its reference in Maturin's work. Sir Adam Ferguson initially worries about the effect the Rotunda will have

on the civic virtue of the populace, due to its potential for introducing a spirit of 'luxury'. As a model of a virtuous citizenship with a love of liberty, he mentions the Greeks and Romans.

We might wonder at the irony of Sir Adam's introduction of the Greeks and Romans at the very point at which he is concerned over the effects that a replication of the pristine original form of a now ruined Roman building will have on the populace of Britain. Consider, though, that for Maturin the Greeks and Romans are 'wonderful savages' precisely because they have left 'traces of their taste for pleasure'. Ferguson's worry is that luxury will corrupt the people, so leaving them without the ability to perform their important role in counterbalancing the crown under the constitution; "But Sir, in the British constitution it is surely of importance to keep up a spirit in the people, so as to preserve a balance against the crown" (Boswell: 477). It is precisely this 'spirit in the people' that is in danger from luxury, represented by the Ranelagh Pantheon for Ferguson. In other words, the 'taste for pleasure' is something that has the potential for damaging the civic role of 'the people'. The discussion about Ranelagh thus becomes a discussion relating to dangers to civic virtue from luxury. As noted in the introduction, Ferguson had put forward a version of the classical republican celebration of civic virtue. For Ferguson, the pursuit of pleasure detracts from a public role primarily because it promotes a retreat from a public civic role towards an ethic of private consumption. Pleasure is therefore a private world in which the individual's desire for satisfaction overcomes the individual's role in the community. Pleasure, though, for Maturin, consists in a culture that is inherently public. As such, the Greeks and Romans are

distinguished by the fact that their ruins suggest a public life as against a public life that can only be described in militaristic imagery.

As we can see from the dialogue with Johnson, though, Ferguson also saw culture as being something that elevated the Greeks and Romans above the status of mere barbarians. Against Johnson's reduction of 'public culture' to being exclusively based within a modern print media, Ferguson points out the existence of the Classical authors. For Johnson, though, this is irrelevant, as he is talking about the 'mass' of the people. Having already rejected Ferguson's point about the 'spirit of the people' as an example of Whiggery, Johnson justifies his labelling of the Greeks and Romans as barbarians precisely because they lack a 'public' culture. England is not barbarous because knowledge is diffused by the newspapers. Johnson had criticised elsewhere the Gaelic oral culture of the Highlands in much the same way, as being outside of print culture and therefore incapable of forming a coherent language, let alone literature:

> When a language begins to teem with books, it is tending to refinement; as those who undertake to teach others must have undergone some labour in improving themselves, they set a proportionate value on their own thoughts, and wish to enforce them by efficacious expressions; speech becomes embodied and permanent; different modes and phrases are compared and the best obtains an establishment. By degrees one age improves upon another. Exactness is first obtained, and afterwards elegance. But diction, merely vocal, is always in its childhood. As no man leaves his eloquence behind him, the new generations have all to learn. There may possibly be books without a polished language, but there can be no polished language without books. (Johnson: 116)

What we can see in both the passage from Boswell and from Maturin is a concern with the location and nature of a public discourse. The conversation between Ferguson and Johnson moves from a discussion about

the dangers of luxury, represented by a building specifically built as a public space for leisure, on the populace (that is, the populace conceived explicitly as members of a polity under a constitution), to a discussion about mass culture, and its connection with civilisation. And for Johnson, civilisation, that which differentiates the modern 'us' from the barbarous 'them' is printing. Newspapers are a synecdoche for a civilised modernity, one in which civic virtue is defined not in terms of the public's role under the constitution but in terms of the diffusion of knowledge among the mass of the people. The civilisation of the Greeks and Romans, for Johnson, is one of a cultured elite separate from the rabble. Once high culture is exposed to a public sphere it is rendered useless and without any agency, as his example of Demosthenes's orations seems to imply. The crowd's apathy towards Demosthenes bespeaks a public that actively marginalises heightened cultural authority.

The idea of a public culture, though, undergoes a radical transformation from Johnson's historical moment to Maturin's. For Johnson, the public readership of newspapers "was...not synonymous with the entire population, but composed of a limited number of educated and enfranchised property owners" (Magnuson: 7). As such, the diffusion of knowledge through newspapers was conducive of social stability and the maintenance of the *status quo*. In a post-Revolutionary historical moment, though, the public culture contains a multiplicity of voices. The press became as much a force for revolutionary change as for social stability. Kevin Whelan has noted the extent to which a revolutionary organisation such as the United Irishmen relied on print-media for the extension of liberty

in Ireland. As Arthur O'Connor put it most forcibly, describing his own paper, *The Press*, as well as print-media in general:

> *The Press* is the palladium of Liberty. What has heretofore made England celebrated over the nations of Europe? – *The Press*. What has overturned the Catholic despotism of France? *The Press*, ... What has electrified England, and called down the curses on a Pitt? That Press he in vain tried to silence. What illumined Belfast, the Athens of Ireland? – *The Press* and the *Northern Star*. Why did America triumph over tyranny? – a journeyman printer fulminated the decree of nature against the giants of England and the pen of a Franklin routed the armies of a King. (quoted in Whelan *Tree of Liberty*: 62)

Not only was the role of the press in securing public stability inapplicable after the revolutionary decade, but the role of virtue was also complicated by its association with the threatening civic nationalism of the United Irishmen. As we will see later in the case of Burns, the nexus at which popular culture, print-media, and the public culture come together can lead to a moment that is fundamentally opposed to the overarching social order.

The effect of the ruins on Stanton in *Melmoth* leads to a position that may seem to counter Johnson's limiting of the public to an enlightened readership, though. Among the ruins that Stanton finds are "the remains of a theatre, and something like a public place". Culture and the public are here intimately fused. The qualification of Johnson's statement (leaving aside for a moment the substitution of 'savage' for 'barbarian') rests precisely on the evidence for diffusion among the public of cultural activity. That this cultural activity is signified here by the term pleasure thereby includes the connotations of luxury that Ferguson had been concerned about. The Greeks and Romans, therefore, despite Maturin's seeming agreement with Johnson about the importance of the press, managed to have a public culture that did

not rely on printing. The implication, therefore, is that public culture is capable of having a historical presence even if that public culture exists outside of print-culture. To take terms from what Brand has said, the ruins signify a 'public authority' that exists outside of the written word. The Romans, of course, possess a written law, but by substituting the term 'savages' for Johnson's 'barbarians' Maturin returns the Romans to a specifically oral stage of society. The term barbarian was by no means incommensurable with written authority, however, the term savage was fundamentally associated with the transmission of culture, belief, and community through oral means.

These ruins in *Melmoth*, however, are similar to folk customs and the oral tradition in that the modern, sensitive observer recuperates them from a form of oblivion. The building that leads to Johnson and Ferguson's discussion is a modern 'recuperation' of a classical ruin, built specifically in the style of the Pantheon yet placed in a modern public space for leisure. Much in the same way, Brand's recuperation of the oral tradition can be seen as recreating something always already figured as a 'ruin', and placing it within the purview of a modern public. Maturin's inclusion of Dr Johnson's comments on the press explicitly links meditation on ruins to the discussion of civility and the press. The Romans are 'wonderful' because they leave traces of pleasure and culture, yet they are 'savages' due to their lack of a press.

Maturin also allows culture a form of agency equal to the more militaristic legacy of the Moors. Both sets of ruins identify forms of imperialism, "two dynasties that had passed away" (29). The Moorish ruins

emphasise military might, and the Moors as a race that has entirely left aside pleasure. Their ruins all "denoted military power". Roman imperialism, however, is represented by the remains of a public culture. Maturin had read Volney, his lead characters in *The Milesian Chief* discussing him in an empty graveyard. The realisation of the mutability of human events, of the eventual passing away of all empires, is, of course, central to Stanton's observations. Maturin is part of a European vogue for ruins that represent, in the words of H. G. Schenk, "the desire for withdrawal from the *malaise* of the present age, and a vague, semi-religious sense of timelessness beyond" (quoted in Ó Giolláin: 27). Along with this, however, is the recognition that the ruin is form of historical narration. It is a point from which the modern observer can recreate the past. These two elements, what Ina Ferris calls "the meditative-aesthetic and the analytic-historical" (Ferris 2002: 108), are captured in Stanton's meditation on the ruin, making the Moorish and Roman ruins "a heterogeneous material fact incorporating various modalities of time but foregrounding the downpulling energies of the natural process" (Ferris 2002: 109). As Maturin later puts it: "The pyramids themselves must perish, but the grass that grows between their disjointed stones will be renewed from year to year" (30). Just as in the meditation on Cloghan Castle, historical memory (or equally, historical forgetting) and temporality are figured within the image of the organic growth supplanting the man-made artifice.

As noted, though, the oral tradition is something that is presented as something that is always under threat. The major distinction though is that whereas the ruins represent an advanced civilisation being erased by nature,

orality is more often presented as nature being erased by an advanced civilisation. The recuperation of oral tradition thus allows the nation to reconnect with its natural state. Brand is actually close to Johnson, in that he takes for granted the 'public authority' of the written word. Speech may be a deposit, but it is recognised as outside of that public authority. The recuperation is therefore similar to both the meditative-aesthetic and analytic-historical approach to ruins, as it can involve both the aesthetic appreciation of a more 'natural' state, and lead to ethnographical enquiries into the historical formation of the nation. Maturin, however, either consciously or unconsciously undercuts the adaptability of ruins to historical remembrance, his "theatres, temples...and baths" recalling Byron's lines from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* on the indecipherability of ancient ruins: "Temples, baths, or halls? / Pronounce who can" (Canto IV, ll. 960-961, Byron: 179).

Maturin's use of 'savage' instead of Johnson's 'barbarian' also involves an important shift. For Johnson himself there was a broad equivalence between savage and barbarian, the two terms being nearly synonymous in his *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). Maturin, however, would have been aware of the difference between the two terms that occurs in Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767).

This leaves us with the problem of why Maturin substituted the term 'savage' for 'barbarian'. On the one hand, 'savage' has connotations of nobility that barbarian does not. On another, we can see that for Ferguson the Roman and Greek polities were at least in some sense the logical conclusion of the savage social order. The place of 'pleasure' though is

confusing. For Ferguson, the savage is partially defined by his abjuration of 'pleasure'. Barbarians may have a taste for ornament, but savages remain above that, dedicated to a noble militaristic code more redolent of Ossian than of the patrons of Ranelagh. The savage spirit is Ossianic, and the Ossianic is savage (see Rubel: 45-53). Maturin therefore overthrows Ferguson's contentions in one sentence, arguing that what was distinctive about the Romans and Greeks was the fact that they were savages who left behind a taste for pleasure, rather than the more 'savage' Moors. In other words, savagery in Maturin's text is linked with pleasure and pleasure is linked with culture. Savagery, therefore, is continuous civility. The statement by Dr Johnson therefore becomes untenable, as the context of the conversation in which it originally took place, added to the subtle rewording from 'barbarian' to 'savage', all evoke precisely the opposite. Civility, culture, and pleasure are affirmed as being as capable without the press as they are with it. The distinctions between savage, barbarian, and modern civilised observer of historical change are broken down. Rather, what we are presented with is a sense of continuity between these terms. What is more, they are capable of leaving historical evidence from which the modern observer can extract both aesthetic pleasure and historical comparisons.

3. The subversive nature of traditional culture

Towards the beginning of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Maturin gives a description of a local Wise Woman and some of the methods by which she entrances the local population. It is the longest sustained description of folk superstitions that is given in any of Maturin's works:

> [I]f there were no lives to be shortened, there were fortunes to be told; - she worked 'by spells, and by such daubry as is beyond our element.' No one twined so well as she the mystic yarn to be dropt into the lime-kiln pit, on the edge of which stood the shivering inquirer into futurity, doubtful whether the answer to her question of 'who holds?' was to be uttered by the voice of demon or lover.
> No one knew so well as she to find where the four streams met, in which, on the same portentous season, the chemise was to be immersed, and then displayed before the fire, (in the name of one whom we dare not mention to 'ears polite'), to be turned by the figure of the destined husband before morning. No one but herself (she said) knew the hand in which the comb was to be held, while the other was employed in conveying the apple to the mouth, - while, during the joint operation, the shadow of the phantom spouse was to pass across the mirror before it was performed. No one was more skilful or active in removing every iron implement from the kitchen where these ceremonies were usually performed by the credulous and terrified dupes of her wizardry, lest, instead of the form of a comely youth exhibiting a ring on his white finger, an headless figure should stalk to the rack, (*Anglicè*, dresser), take down a long spit, or, in default of that, snatch a poker from the fire-side, and mercilessly take measure with its iron length of the sleeper for a coffin. No one, in short, knew better how to torment or terrify her victims into a belief of that power which may have reduced the strongest minds to the level of the weakest…' (11)

What seems to be a straightforward piece of auto-exoticism listing peasant customs becomes more complicated if we look at the source for these beliefs. For unlike Brand, or Lady Morgan and Maria Edgeworth, we are not getting something 'authentic' in this passage, mediated to the literate public from some reservoir of archaic folk customs. What we have instead is (with the exception of the last mentioned custom) a straightforward prose rendition of folk customs mentioned in Robert Burns' poem 'Halloween'. The introduction Burns provided for his poem locates the peasant's desire for knowledge of futurity in precisely the 'rude' state that we have already seen mentioned in Ferguson's work:

> The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened in our own. (Burns *Canongate*: 74)

Much in the same way as Brand, therefore, Burns is presenting practices that are somehow ahistorical to an enlightened audience, and thus recovering folk practices from the 'venerable Deposit' into an enlightened historicity. Just as in *Melmoth* the contemplation of ruins "might have pleased a philosopher" (29), the ethnographic listing of folk customs is proffered to the reader as perhaps being of "some entertainment to a philosophic mind". Its entertainment lies in the fact that it grants the reader an insight into a more natural, pre-civilised stage of mankind. It returns the reader, therefore, to the savage stage, the 'rude state' that precedes the enlightened audience of the poem. The idea that one is returning to a more natural state that is to be valued for the insight it gives into an ahistorical universal human nature is vitally important. Yet, Burns does not preclude the possibility that to some of his readers the folk customs will already be familiar:

> The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added," (74)

Burns' ideal readership, therefore, will contain those who recognise the customs described as well as a more philosophical reader who will be able to place such beliefs within a larger framework of comparative historical concepts. A good example of the ambivalent position of audience and text can be seen in Burns' poem 'Address to the People of Scotland,

Respecting Francis Grose, Esq; the British Antiquarian' which appeared in *The Northern Star*, 14th April, 1792. While there is no direct evidence that Maturin might have read this, the presentation of folk material and the processes by which it is presented are relevant to the strategies employed in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The poem is introduced in the voice of the enlightened editorship of *The Northern Star*:

> The following address to the People of Scotland, was written by Mr Robt. Burns, the Ayrshire Poet, when Capt. Grose, the British Antiquarian, was on his peregrination in Scotland, in the year 1791, collecting materials for his publication of the antiquities of that country.
> The ideas in this, like the rest of Mr Burns's productions, are singular and eccentric, and exhibits a just picture of the sentiments of the low peasantry of Scotland, respecting any gentleman who is professedly an Antiquarian – He is deemed to be in colleague with SATAN, and to be a dealer in magic and the BLACK ART, a vulgar prejudice, which all the light and learning of the present day, have not yet been able totally to eradicate. ('Muses' Retreat': 7)

This is followed by Burns' poem, written in dialect:

> Hear, Land o' Cakes, and brither Scots,
> Frae Maiden Kirk, to Johnie Groat's,
> If there's a hole in a' your coats,
> I red you tent it;
> A chield's amang you taking notes,
> And faith he'll prent it. (ll. 1-7)

We have multiple perspectives here. On the one hand we have seen how a writer like Brand will label the oral tradition and superstitious practices of the peasantry as a 'venerable deposit' that we are given access to through his book. The poem by Burns though, is written from the other side. Here the antiquarian is the intruder, and the threat to the community is that he will print the notes he takes. Yet the poem is in turn presented by the editor as detailing superstitions that are assumed to be alien to the presumed readership of *The Northern Star*. The poem, in other words, addressed to the

people of Scotland, is reconfigured as addressed to an enlightened cosmopolitan audience, and it performs the same act of 'printing' that is threatened by Grose. There are then at least two audiences addressed in the poem and its textual apparatus that are presented as mutually antagonistic. What the poem also does, however, is invest the figure of the antiquarian with precisely those supernatural elements that he is supposedly recording:

> At some auld howlet-haunted biggin,
> Or kirk defected by its riggin,
> It's ten to one ye'll fine him snug in
> Some eldritch part;
> Wi deils, they say, Lord save's! colleaguing
> At some *black art*. (ll. 15-21)

Burns even points out Grose's military background (It's tauld he was a sodger bred/And one wou'd rather fa' than fled [ll. 25-26]). His choice to "taen the Antiquarian trade" (l. 29) is intimated to be just an extension of this, a practice that replaces actual violence with a type of cultural violence. The placing of the poem in the *Northern Star* is interesting though. As already commented, the press was by no means the engine of social stability that Johnson had valorised in his conversation with Ferguson. Instead, we have here a confluence (albeit an uneasy one) between separatist republicanism and popular culture. The popular antiquities that Brand was so enthusiastic about are just as open to different political interpretations as the print-media. In the 1790s the oral tradition was as often a repository of potentially radical and subversive sentiment as it was of ethnographic observation. As Marilyn Butler points out when discussing the antiquarian Joseph Ritson's reprinting of English oral tales and ballads, such forms were seen as full of "democratic implications" (*Burke, Paine, Godwin*: 203). In Burns' case, a poem about the danger to a community by a soldier turned

antiquarian, is itself transformed by the preface into a poem worthwhile because of its veracity as an ethnographic document in its own right.

We can see in 'Address to the People of Scotland', then, some of the issues of audience that are brought up in the poem that Maturin plagiarises. The dichotomy between an address to an organic community and a modern readership is represented in Burns' poem 'Halloween' by the presence of footnotes describing in standard English the customs presented in Scots in the poem itself:

> Wee Jenny to her Graunie says,
> 'Will ye go wi' me, Graunie?
> I'll *eat the apple* at the glass,
> I gat frae uncle Johnie:'
>
> Take a candle and go alone to a looking glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder. (Burns *Canongate*: 78)

At least for part of Burns' readership, then, the customs mentioned are part of a living tradition. Unlike the Irish originals of Ossian that are mentioned in *The Wild Irish Girl* but are nowhere directly presented, Burns presupposes that some of his readership will have had direct contact with these customs, if not having practised some of them themselves. Maturin's plagiarising of Burns' poem implies quite a different readership. Instead of the quasi-communal aspect of Burns' introduction, we have the folk customs presented to an audience who will have encountered them in a prior published text rather than in real life. If the reader of *Melmoth* recognises the customs mentioned, therefore, it is not because of their position as a Scottish peasant (presumably) but because they have read of those customs previously. We are therefore presented with a subtle intertextuality that

locates these customs as belonging to a community of readers rather than of practitioners. This separates the listing of folk customs in Maturin's novel from similar auto-exotic moves in novels like *Castle Rackrent* or *The Wild Irish Girl*. Whereas they were involved in "the tendency to employ footnotes and digressions in order to represent a 'real Irish' local or historical background" (Leerssen *Remembrance*: 37), Maturin's deployment of folk culture draws attention to the whole process by which that culture is absorbed and legitimated by the very print culture outside of which it is supposed to operate. The 'priority' of the folk customs in terms of their ahistoricity in relation to the 'enlightened' text is deconstructed, leaving them presented as bound up within that historicity, as part of a recognisable series of literary tropes already before the reader. To perhaps illustrate in a slightly different fashion, we could say that Burns presents the ruins of the Pantheon as authentic ruins, Maturin presents them as an 'authentic reproduction' in Ranelagh.

As such, the 'local colour' in *Melmoth the Wanderer* can be seen to be reducing the possibility of the Irish oral tradition as being capable of an authenticity that would make it of moral and cultural value to the nation. Biddy Brannigan, the old woman that is characterised as "witch-like" seems to be portrayed solely in a negative light along with the cultural traditions that she supposedly represents. She lives a "squalid existence by practising on the fears, the ignorance, and the sufferings of beings as miserable as herself" (10). Apart from the more overt references to folklore surrounding witches and charms, Maturin alludes subtly to the folk belief that witches could change into animal form in order to steal milk from cattle. Thomas

Crofton Croker would refer to "vulgar superstition regarding witches, [...] their power of assuming the shape of some insect or animal – the favourite forms are those of a fly or a hare" (Croker: 97). When Brannigan is summoned by young Melmoth "[she] walked deliberately across the room, seated, or rather squatted herself on the hearth-stone *like a hare in her form*" (24. Italics added). There are suggestions, though, that her role as local witch is not exclusively negative. What is important though, is to note how her practices vary according to the class she is addressing:

> Among the better sort, to whom she had sometimes had access by the influence of servants, she tried the effects of some simples, her skill in which was sometimes productive of success. Among the lower orders she talked much of the effects of the 'evil eye', against which she boasted a counter-spell, of unfailing efficacy; and while she spoke, she shook her grizzled locks with such witchlike eagerness, that she never failed to communicate to her half-terrified, half-believing audience, some portion of that enthusiasm which, amid all her consciousness of imposture, she herself probably felt a large share of... (10)

In other words, Brannigan has a sometimes restorative effect on the 'better sort', while her relationship with her own class is characterised by both imposture and 'enthusiasm' – she practices a form of spiritual enslavement. It is possible that we have here the central problem involved in appropriating folk customs into polite literature. On the one hand is the productive effect of introducing a polite class to peasant culture, while on the other is the enlightened recognition that such practices when performed among the classes from which they come, "the lower orders", are a form of control. Brannigan therefore operates in that liminal space suggested by Burns in the introduction to 'Halloween' between enlightened observers and credulous practitioners. We have here both a celebration and censoring of

folk customs, a recognition that the appeal and function of folk customs varies in type across class boundaries. As such, the appropriation of folk material into polite culture as relics of a 'venerable deposit' can be construed as a process with definite class implications. As the ideological battles of the 1790s had demonstrated, certain practices and popular traditions could be recuperated for specifically radical ends. Folk customs, in other words, become invested with social and political capital not through an *a priori* existence but through their mediated appearance before 'the better sort'. What invests the oral tradition with symbolic capital is not some essential quality it possesses, but the manner in which it is appropriated by modernity.

4. Anecdotes and 'traditional history' as sources of historical memory

In spite of the ambivalent position that Brannigan is presented as having in society, she does have a level of authority at the narrative level. Brannigan operates in a similar manner to the character of the Old Woman in *Women* who suggested a Catholic alterity as well as a folkloric anteriority. From the point of view of the novels' structure, both have what we might term narratorial capital, that is, they reveal the past that informs the novel's present. They perform a similar role, therefore, to the old woman in *Women.* Brannigan provides the first and in some respects the most important account of Melmoth in which his relation to the Cromwellian plantation is sketched out, as well indicating his supernatural statues:

> Such was the account given by Biddy Brannigan, to which she added her own solemnly-attested belief, that John Melmoth the Traveller was still without a hair on his head changed, or a muscle in his frame contracted; - that she had seen those that had seen him, and would confirm their evidence by oath if necessary; - that he was never heard to

> speak, seen to partake of food, or known to enter any dwelling but that of his family; - and, finally, that she herself believed that his late appearance boded no good either to the living or the dead. (27)

In a novel of multiple narratives the first is given to Brannigan, and in some ways sets the tone for all of the following narrators. In the words of Regina Oost, she "provides the model and the foundation for the Gothic tale-spinning that follows" (Oost: 296). In an earlier passage she was presented as replacing any sort of rational argument with elliptical mutterings:

> [W]hen credulity itself lost all patience, and hope and life were departing together, she urged the miserable patient to confess '*there was something about his heart*;' and when this confession was extorted from the weariness of pain and the ignorance of poverty, she nodded and muttered so mysteriously, as to convey to the bystanders, that she had had difficulties to contend with which were invincible by human power. (10. Italics in original.)

A seemingly straightforward satire on an old crone's obfuscation and self-aggrandisement, therefore. Yet Maturin gives her a form of validation, in that Old Melmoth is revealed to be dying of something 'about his heart':

> 'John, they say I am dying of this and that; and one says it is for want of nourishment, and one says it is for want of medicine, - but, John,' and his face looked hideously ghastly, 'I am dying of a fright.' (18)

The novel concerns itself, that is, with the possibility of the 'something about the heart' that defies rationality, just as the Wanderer will prove to be a difficulty that is invincible by human power.

Brannigan's, however, is ultimately one narrative amid many. What I would like to suggest though is that she opens the possibility of narrative and thus some form of historical record. Her account of the Wanderer includes a reference to the manuscript of Stanton, and thus we have the beginning of the chain of narratives that constitute the main body of the

novel. She, also, however, introduces an important theme in the novel. Maturin chooses the folk customs he lists from Burns carefully. All of them are concerned with gaining knowledge of future events – specifically the identity of the future spouse. We might notice two things about this. Firstly, all of the practices involve women as both agents and recipients of folk knowledge. These arcane practices are specifically female practices, with women performing and benefiting from them. When read in conjunction with the motifs of traditional Irish storytelling in the novel (Brannigan and, later, the nurse), we seem to have a gendering of peasant culture. This motif of women as repositories of an alternative historical memory continues throughout the text, as the following passage from 'The Lovers' Tale' shows:

> On all they read or conversed of, Mrs Ann Mortimer was a living comment. Her conversation, rich in anecdote, and accurate to minuteness, sometimes rising to the loftiest strains of eloquence, as she related 'deeds of the days of old,' and often borrowing the sublimity of inspiration [...] was to her grand-nieces at once history and poetry.
> The event of English history then not recorded, had a kind of traditional history more vivid, if not so faithful as the records of modern historians, in he memories of those who had been agents and sufferers (the terms are probably synonymous) in those memorable periods. (452-453)

Here we have the female narrator presented as almost akin to the ruins Stanton views in Spain, being at once a site of both history and poetry. The simultaneity of both the historical and the aesthetic is at once lauded and recognised as deficient, 'less faithful'. Maturin even goes so far as to present himself as a witness to historical facts. In mentioning the habits of his great-grandfather he "asserts, 'suo periculo'," that the servants were

similar to those in Old Melmoth's house. The reviewer for the *Quarterly Review* focused on what appeared to be a grammatical slip:

> The *author of the tale* either fables, or does not understand the Latin words which he uses. He *might* have repeated the story on the authority of his mother, or what would have been better still, his grandmother, but to tell it *suo periculo*, is to say that he, the reverend author, was present when his *great grandfather* hired the turbot-adjuring servants; which, as that must have taken place a century ago, can hardly be true, unless indeed Mr Maturin be Mr Melmoth himself. (*Quarterly Review* 1820: 308 Italics in original)

Interestingly, the reviewer sees the possibility of the anecdote coming to Maturin as being caught up in female storytelling. In other words, Maturin could only have heard of this event either directly from the main character, or through the mediation of women. Yet, the apparent misunderstanding of the Latin phrase may not be a misunderstanding at all. What it does is place 'the author of the tale' within the same narrative discourse of subjective, oral immediacy as Melmoth. The ironic comment of the reviewer linking Maturin to Melmoth may not be so ironic at all. Maturin constantly returns to the difference between a lived historical memory and more 'objective' forms of historical inquiry. Just as contemplating the ruins led to a moment that recognised both a timeless aesthetic appreciative mood and a immediate sense of historicity, Ann Mortimer's retelling of history involves a moment that is "at once history and poetry". The assertion of Maturin that this minor anecdote is told 'suo periculo' implicates the author himself in this moment. The text we are reading revels in its own textuality, yet bases itself in this instance on the kind of oral testimonies that will provide the more reliable modes of historical memory in what follows. We could compare it to Burns'

'Address' by saying that Maturin incorporates all the different viewpoints that were evident in the poem and its paratext (communal insider, enlightened observer, antiquarian researcher). Yet, typically of Maturin, this moment summons up its own counterpoint. The very use of the Latin phrase for a situation in which it is logically inappropriate opens up the possibility of the collapse of the authenticity of the subjective recollection. Far from being a mere misunderstanding, an example of Maturin's "want of veracity" (*Quarterly Review*: 307), the use of 'suo periculo' places the difference between subjective historical memory and objective historical recordation as the central principle, not only of the story but also of the structure, of the novel.

The difference between the subjective recollection of history that must be involved in oral recitation of the type that Ann Mortimer is involved in and the more textual form of historical recordation is further developed:

> [How] much superior are the touches of one who paints from life, and the heart, and the senses, - to those of one who dips his pen in his ink-stand, and casts his eye on a heap of musty parchments, to glean his facts or his feelings from them! (453)

Maturin has already deliberately referenced Burns at this point, and so this might be read as the very impossibility of representing the oral in print – one is always already working with a musty parchment (or an old edition of the *Northern Star*). If the narrator of history is gendered as female, though, the 'authoritative' historian is male, and works in a resolutely, barrenly, textual world. Yet, it is precisely the world that Young Melmoth finds himself in having listened to Brannigan, and that the young Spaniard, Moncada, will find himself in having escaped from the Inquisition. Both Young Melmoth

and Moncada operate within an idea of historical recordation that relies on textual evidence – the manuscript of Stanton for Young Melmoth and the manuscripts collected by the Jew, Adonijah, for Moncada. And while Maturin might assign to the 'textual' male historian a greater 'faithfulness', the texts with which these two characters work notoriously resist interpretation. Stanton's manuscript "was discoloured, obliterated, and mutilated beyond any that had ever before exercised the patience of a reader" (28), while Adonijah's text contains "*the Spanish language* written in *the Greek characters* – a mode of writing that, [Moncada] easily conceived, must have been as unintelligible to the officers of the Inquisition, as the Hieroglyphics of the Egyptian priests" (270).

The claims of what might be termed a textualist history to accuracy of representation, therefore, can be seen to be open to doubt. Into this vacuum left by the incomplete text we can see the oral as supplying an equally incomplete narrative, yet one which is legitimised by its claim to an aesthetic truth. Oral narration, specifically as it appears in the Irish tradition of storytelling, is initially presented in a derogatory light. Having witnessed the shipwreck that leads to his meeting with Moncada, Young Melmoth awakes in the company of his nurse, who proceeds to relate to him the events of his rescue by the Spaniard:

> She began her narrative, the effect of which was, to lull Melmoth into a profound repose before half of it was concluded; he felt the full benefit of the invalids mentioned in Spenser, who used to hire Irish story-tellers, and found those indefatigable persons still pursuing the tale when they awoke. (68)

While this seems to be a random piece denigrating the Irish storyteller, it is echoed later in the novel when the scorn is thrown onto the listener rather

than the narrator. As Melmoth is telling Don Aliaga the story designated 'The Lovers' Tale' he arrives at the point at which a clergyman is about to reveal to Elinor the history of the Wanderer:

> 'The night arrived – imagine them seated in the antique study of the clergyman, whose shelves were filled with the ponderous volumes of ancient learning – the embers of a peat fire shed a dim and fitful light through the room, and the single candle that burned on a distant oaken stand, seemed to shed its light on that alone – not a ray fell on the figures of Elinor and her companion, as they sat in their massive chairs of carved-like figures in the richly-wrought niches of some Catholic place of worship---'
> 'That is a most profane and abominable comparison,' said Aliaga, starting from the doze in which he had frequently indulged during this long narrative. (498)

So, we seem to have a situation in which Melmoth himself can be seen to be a type of storyteller himself. He is also similar to Ann Mortimer in that he represents a form of historical memory based on personal witness, a fact noticed by Moncada in his initial conversations with him:

> 'He constantly alluded to events and personages beyond his *possible memory*, - then he checked himself, - then he appeared to go on, with a kind of wild and derisive sneer at his own *absence*. But his perpetual reference to events long past, and men long buried, made an impression on me I cannot describe [...] He dealt much in anecdotical history, and I, who was very ignorant of it, was delighted to listen to him, for he told everything with the fidelity of an eye-witness [...] These circumstances were trifling, and might be told by any one, but there was a minuteness and circumstantiality in his details, that perpetually forced on the mind the idea that he had himself seen what he described, and been conversant with the personages he spoke of. (228-229 Italics in original.)

Moncada listens with a "mixture of curiosity and terror" until after a particular anecdote he asks Melmoth if he had been present:

> 'He gave some indirect answer; and, avoiding the subject, went on to amuse me with some other curious circumstances of the private history of that age, of which he spoke with a minute fidelity somewhat *alarming*. (229 Italics in original)

Melmoth becomes the one character in the novel that has any access to an accurate history, or at least one that can be characterised as delivered with "a minute fidelity". It is the central irony of the novel that his diabolic pact leaves him not with knowledge of futurity as hoped for, but knowledge of the past. He is both the storyteller and the story told, and his long absences from the novel confirm him as an elliptical, fragmentary character. This is in spite of the fact that he is singled out as unique by the unnamed narrator of 'The Tale of Guzman's Family':

> There has been, however, I believe, no other instance of a person still alive, and apparently exercising all the functions of a human agent, who has become already the subject of written memoirs, and the theme of traditional history. (397)

Melmoth thus belongs both to written memoirs and the anecdotal 'traditional history' that Lady Ann Mortimer engages in.

Melmoth's own deployment of "anecdotal history" recalls the preface to a novel that Maturin would have been hugely aware of in its subsequent influence on Irish (and indeed Scottish) fiction, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, in which the divergence between an 'authoritative' history and an anecdotal one is presented. Reacting against critics who censure "the prevailing taste of the public for anecdote" (Edgeworth *Castle Rackrent*: 61), the preface goes on to recognise the deficiencies of 'authoritative' history:

> Besides, there is much uncertainty even in the best authenticated ancient or modern histories; and that love of truth, which in some minds is innate and immutable, necessarily leads to a love of secret memoirs and private anecdotes. (61)

For Edgeworth, the retelling of Thady Quirk's narrative is intimately bound up with questions of authority and authenticity, and the question of authenticity leads to the linguistic experimentation that tries to capture Thady's dialect, meaning we have an attempted direct representation of an oral performance:

> [The editor] had it once in contemplation to translate the language of Thady into plain English; but Thady's idiom is incapable of translation, and, besides, the authenticity of his story would have been exposed to doubt if it were not told in its own characteristic manner. (63)

Just as with Burns, there is an attempt to present the oral performance to the reader in a form that is authentic yet mediated by extra-textual paraphernalia (notes, glossary, etc.). Melmoth operates in a similar way to Thady, being given a form of authority outside of 'public' history. Of course, we have seen earlier a dichotomy between public and private that suggests femininity is associated with the private, the anecdotal. Brannigan and the nurse were examples of this, in which folk customs and the storytelling tradition are associated with women. Maturin, however, 'masculinizes' his prime storytellers. Melmoth's conversations with Moncada (and later with Aliaga) enact an oral performance similar to Brannigan's, in which the oral retains its private nature, its sense of a 'truer' history than that offered by written texts. The similarity between the ruin and the oral, both forms of historical memory that problematically combine 'history and poetry,' becomes even clearer as Melmoth is encountered later in the text.

His later reappearance before Moncada reconfigures the earlier ruin scene in Stanton's manuscript. As Moncada is fleeing the burning buildings

of the Inquisition, he sees Melmoth on top of one of the highest spires in the compound:

> The night was intensely dark, but so strong was the light of the conflagration, that I could see the spire blazing, from the reflected lustre, like a meteor. The hands of the clock were as visible as if a torch was held before them; and this calm and silent progress of time, amid the tumultuous confusion of midnight horrors, - this scene of the physical and mental world in an agony of fruitless and incessant motion, might have suggested a profound and singular image, had not my whole attention been riveted to a human figure on a pinnacle of the spire, and surveying the scene in perfect tranquillity. (...) At that very moment, the archway of the court opposite to us gave way, and sunk in ruins at our feet, dashing, as it fell, an ocean of flame against us. (242)

We are presented here with the actual violent creation of 'ruins', in which the buildings are violently destroyed. Moncada almost indulges in contemplation, however, with his recognition that the contrast between the measured progress of time and the chaotic movement of the physical world 'suggested a profound and singular image'. Stanton, of course, is explicitly linked to such a form of contemplation, and the image of the ruins falling at the observer's feet is carried over from the earlier scene in which "the rifted stones rolled down the hill and fell at [his] feet" (30). In the violent historicity of Moncada's situation, however, such contemplation is rejected before it can develop beyond suggestion. The one character who can contemplate this scene is, of course, the Wanderer himself. The "perfect tranquillity" he shows is in fact that of the Romantic aesthete viewing ruins. Placing himself above the clock, he puts himself in a privileged position 'above' temporal progression. Removed from historicity, from "the calm and silent progress of time", he can appreciate the ruins of the Inquisition as aesthetic objects. The violent history that was to some extent denied in

Stanton's view of the ruins (in which there is no enquiry into the historical moment in which building became ruin), thus comes before the reader's eyes. At the same moment, though, the earlier scene is subtly referenced in order to comment on the denial of historicity involved in the purely aesthetic appreciation of the ruin. There is a complicity suggested between the hypothetical "philosopher" of the earlier scene, "who might have indulged in the reflection" (29), and the Wanderer who surveys the scene in perfect tranquillity.

Melmoth as a character here enacts a form of ahistoricity. He becomes separated from temporal progression and the tumult of the scene. Of course, this had already been prefigured by his conversations with Moncada in which he shows "a minute fidelity" to events long past. He becomes, in other words, the ultimate authority on history, having combined the aesthetic and the historical in his own person – an immortal ruin in which the moment he moves from historical character to ahistorical figure (i.e. his pact with the Devil) is never witnessed. It is the one moment that resists any form of recording, oral or textual.

6. Conclusion

The only method for obtaining some 'true' historical sense remains unseen, and it is notable that Melmoth fails in his attempt to pass the diabolic pact on to another. The novel ends with his disappearance (it is presumed that he has been dragged over a sea cliff). Resolution, however, is not attained. Melmoth's rhetorical question to Moncada and Young Melmoth, "Who can tell so well of Melmoth the Wanderer as himself?"

(536), is never answered, as he never tells any more stories. Very pointedly, at this point "neither of his companions [i.e. Moncada and Young Melmoth] had the power to speak" (537). Even his death is uncertain, his last injunction to Moncada and Young Melmoth ambivalent about his destiny:

> 'Leave me, I must be alone for the few last hours of my mortal existence – *if indeed they are to be my last.*' He spoke this with an inward shuddering, that was felt by his hearers. 'In this apartment,' he continued, 'I first drew breath, in this I must *perhaps* resign it, - would – would I had never been born!' (540 Italics added.)

The implication of the Wanderer's speech is that there is a possibility that the neat circularity by which he dies in the room in which he was born may not actually be fulfilled. The prospect of closure, of a definitive ending of the tale, remains distant, if attainable at all. Moncada already indicated that there are several other stories relating to the Wanderer that he can tell – none of these stories are told. In his own way, Melmoth becomes a type of Demosthenes-figure as presented in Johnson's conversation with Ferguson, unable to communicate to a public that does not have the necessary means to appreciate him.

Conclusion: Looking for Melmoth in the Market

Balzac's *Melmoth Reconcilè* (1835) begins with a brief discourse on the position of the bank cashier within a civilisation "[that] since 1815 has been moved by the spirit of gain rather than by principles of honour" (57). The story concerns Castanier, an embezzling cashier in a large bank in Paris. Finishing work one evening, he is approached by an 'Englishman' named John Melmoth. Melmoth seems to be able to read Castanier's thoughts, and his eyes have an "intolerable glitter" (61). Melmoth cashes a draft and leaves, but approaches Castanier some months later at the theatre, where he creates an illusion that shows Castanier his possible future, in which he arrested and sentenced to hard labour. Having seen this, Castanier accepts the offer that Melmoth makes, of taking his place in the diabolical pact that had given Melmoth his strange powers. Castanier is transformed from "a man who had looked so good-humoured and good-natured [to one] grown tyrannical and proud" (86). Melmoth, meanwhile, finds absolution in a Catholic church and dies redeemed. Castanier uses his new powers to indulge in all manner of debauchery and excess. This soon enervates him, however, and he becomes desperate to find someone to take his place in the Faustian pact. Whereas in *Melmoth the Wanderer* the central drama hinged on the fact that Melmoth could find nobody willing to exchange places with him, in Balzac's story the pact is all to easy to pass it on. This, Castanier reasons aloud, is due to the development of the Stock Exchange:

> 'There is one place where you can learn what kings will fetch in the market; where nations are weighed in the balance and systems appraised; where the value of a government is stated in terms of the five-franc piece; where ideas and beliefs have their price, and everything is discounted; where God himself,

> in a manner, borrows on the security of his revenue of souls, for the Pope has a running account there. Is it not there I should go to traffic in souls?' (102)

In Castanier's Paris, everything has a price. He finds it relatively easy to pass on the pact to another clerk, Claparon, who in turn finds it easy to pass it on to other buyers. What had been the unspeakable absence in Maturin's fiction, becomes here transformed into a business contract that is gradually devalued over the course of one day in the market:

> The Devil's bond, 'together with the rights, easements, and privileges appertaining thereunto,' – to use the expression of the notary who succeeded Claparon, changed hands for the sum of seven hundred thousand francs. The notary in his turn parted with the agreement with the Devil for five hundred thousand francs to a building contractor in difficulties, who likewise was rid of it to an iron merchant in consideration of a hundred thousand crowns. In fact, by five o'clock people had ceased to believe in the strange contract, and purchasers were lacking for want of confidence. (105-106)

The pact eventually rests with a "wretched clerk" (108), who overdoses on mercury and dies, and in this manner "the secret of the vast power discovered and acquired by the Irishman, the offspring of Mathurin's (*sic*) brain, was lost to mankind" (108).

In Maturin's novels that have Ireland as a central location, we are presented with characters of heightened sensibility, often associated with some form of cultural production, gradually marginalised by a commercial modernity in which cultural reproductions are always devalued by their association with the marketplace. The national tale's reorientation of virtue from a republican civic humanist position to one associated with the dignity of individual national cultures was problematised by Maturin in his fiction. For Maturin, primeval sentiments were not as easily reconciled to modern forms as in Owenson or De Staël's work. The Burkean nightmare of a

modernity that lacks the sensibility to appreciate symbolic capital becomes the central feature of his novels on Ireland, a country that for Maturin is not a locus of 'tradition', but in fact paradoxically one of the only truly 'modern' countries in post-Napoleonic Europe. Maturin's allusiveness constantly points out the impossibility of achieving 'authenticity' in modern forms of cultural transmission. In *The Wild Irish Boy* he draws overt connections between Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* and the fashionable crowd's taste for novelty. *The Milesian Chief* presents an equivocal portrait of sensibility being overcome by an unfeeling modernity, in which cultural production cannot exist outside of the world of commercial transactions. *Women* re-writes *Corinne*, to ultimately show how all forms of heightened feminine sensibility, cultural or domestic, increasingly find it difficult to exist in a public space that has become resolutely textual. *Melmoth the Wanderer*, his most famous novel, removes 'tradition' from its putative origin in an organic community, and makes its central performative character a satanic eruption into modernity.

Balzac's sequel is apt. That Melmoth's bargain should become just another commodity to be exchanged on the 'Bourse is fitting, as this had been the subtext of most of his novels. The initial anecdote from Mangan that I began with showed Maturin disappearing in the bookshops of Anglesea Street, as fitting an image to end with, as it was to begin. Mangan himself plagiarised Balzac's story for publication in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1838. Entitled 'The Man in the Cloak: A Very German Story', Mangan's tale minutely follows Balzac's except for the final devaluation of the bond in the market, which Mangan skips over. Whether he wanted to at

least try to differentiate his story from Balzac's original, or whether he wanted to suggest that Faustian pacts retain their value is a moot point.

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